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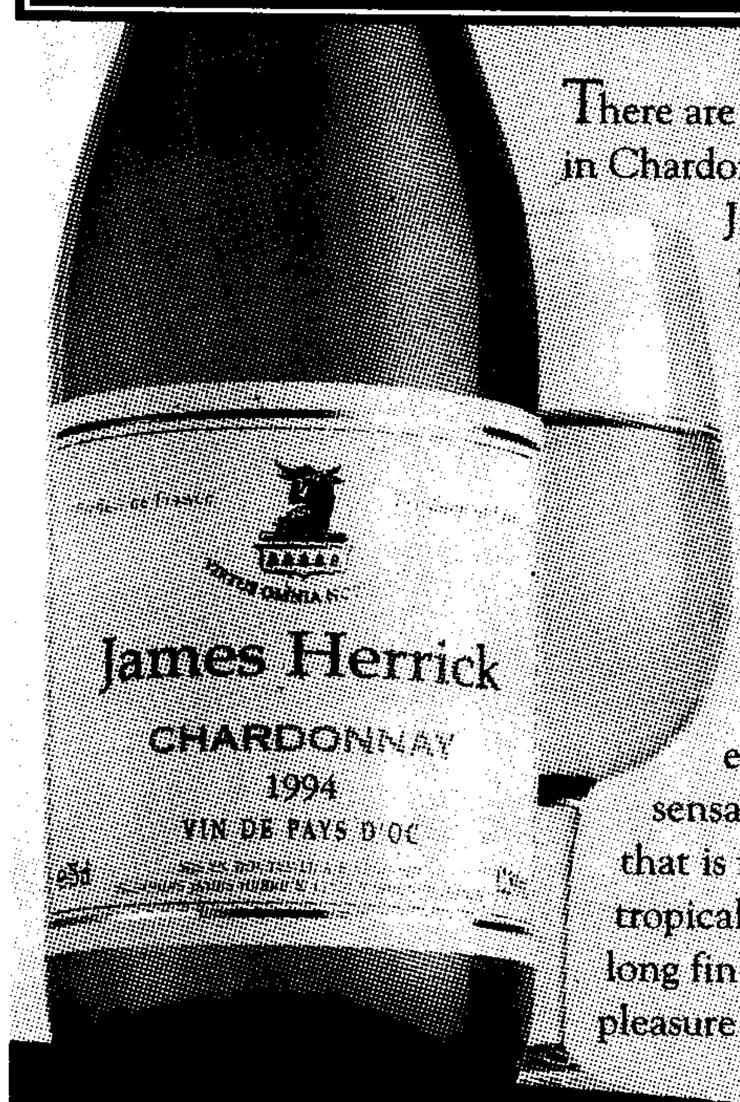

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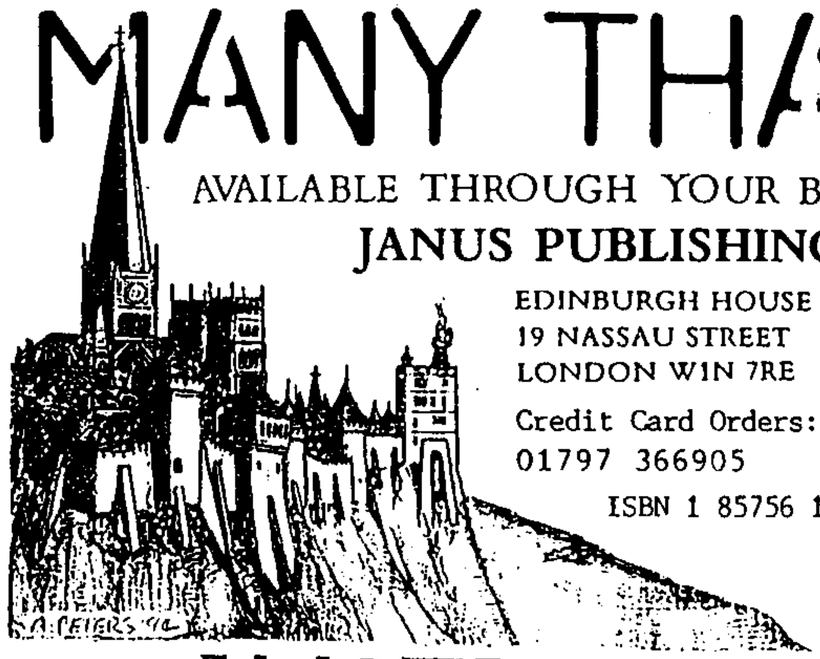

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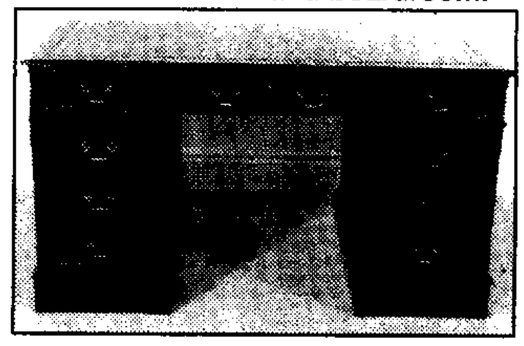

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Gnome

I AM pleased to say that Virginia Bottomley has made an excellent start in her new post as Heritage Secretary.

Her announcement that the Government would not be introducing any legislation to restrict the behaviour of the press was a triumph for good sense.

It must have been obvious to Mrs Bottomley that the Press is doing its best to put its own house in order and that such attempts are the only realistic way forward.

The thought that we might all put the boot into the Conservatives at the next election and support Blair instead if she did not play ball will not even have occurred to her.

Self-regulation is the key and I can assure Mrs Bottomley that her faith in our ability to behave responsibility will prove to be well-founded.

E.Strobes
Lord Gnome

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(That's enough. E.S.)

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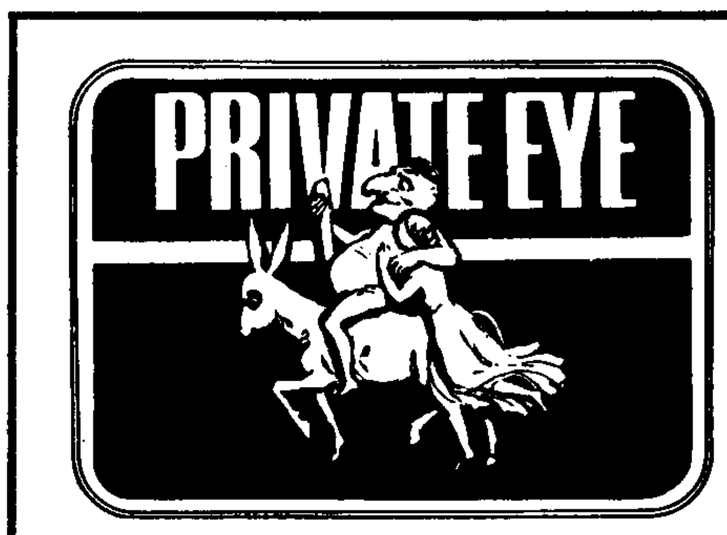


COLOUR SECTION

Letter From 'A Far Away Country Of Which We Know Nothing'

by Our Own Correspondent

"THE English never drew a line without blurring it," said Winston S. Churchill, in clear anticipation of John Major's latest incarnation as the grey ghost of Neville Chamberlain.

This latest bombing threat is so impressive! It will not be triggered by attacks on safe havens like Zepa or Bihac which have been under attack for months. It will not be triggered by shelling of safe havens like Tuzla or Sarajevo. No, only if the Serbs attack Gorazde is there a faintest chance of them being bombed. Unsurprisingly, the Serbs now seem to be rolling up Zepa and Bihac instead!

If Major had been prime minister in 1940, you can imagine his speeches: "We shall not fight in Srebrenica, we shall not fight in Zepa. We shall not fight on the beaches. We shall not fight in the killing fields. We will always withdraw. Oh, yes." Even Chamberlain never imposed an arms embargo on the Czechs when they were being gobbled up by Hitler.

Not that the French are any better. We remember affectionately their previous fine stands for freedom, like opening the doors of a French armoured car so the Serbs could murder our Vice President, and running their heavy APCs over our tunnel under the airport in an attempt to collapse it. Now, within weeks of General Janvier doing dirty deals with Karadzic to stop air strikes in return for releasing French hostages, Paris announced a new crusade to take back Srebrenica, if only the Anglo-Saxons agreed to join in. They were, of course correctly, confident that Major and Clinton would not call their bluff.

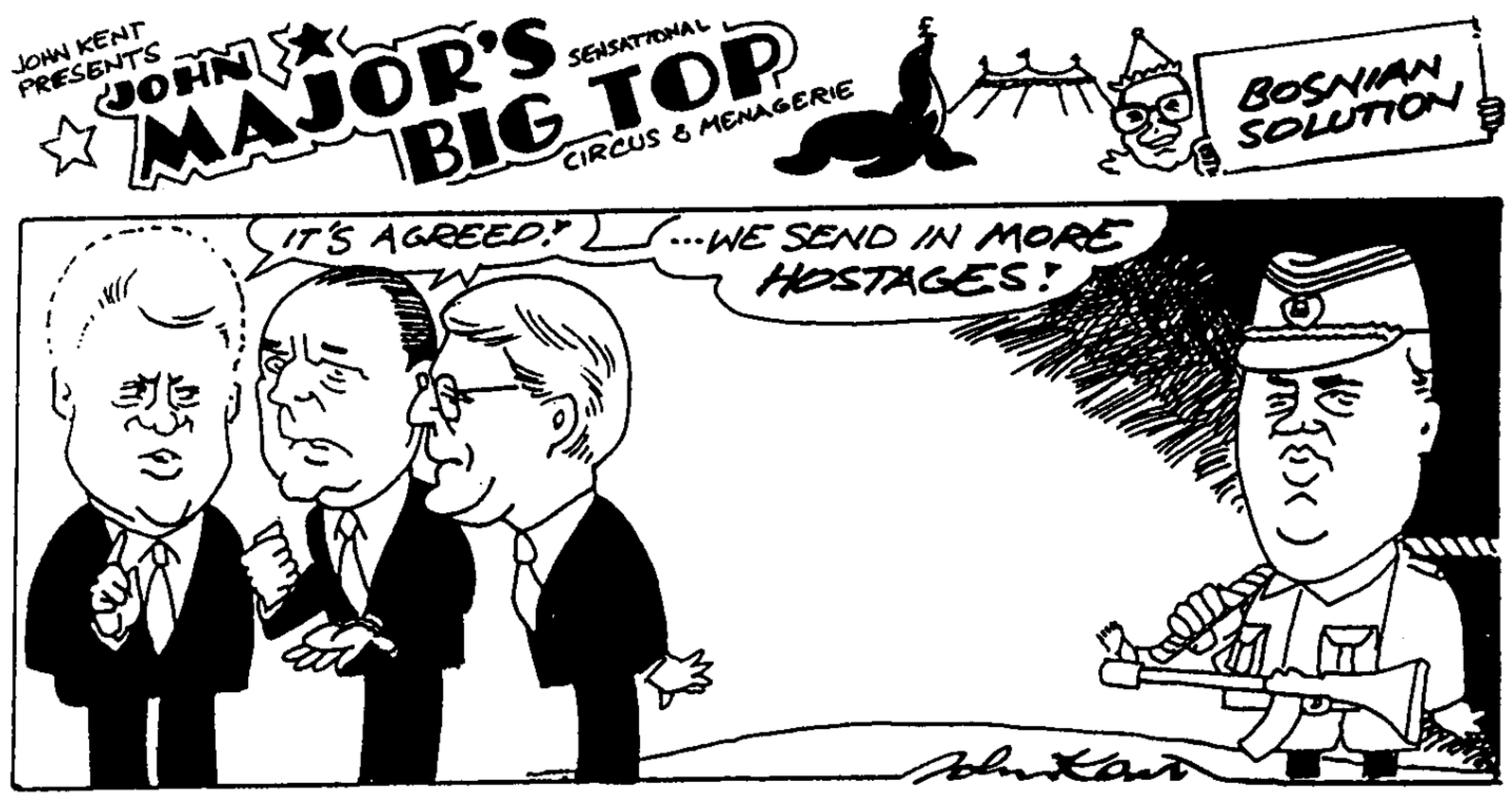
And as for wobbly Willy! Although he has broken almost every other pledge he ever made, he has promised to commit 25,000 US troops to the fray to help the Brits and French to withdraw. Since a US soldier breaking a finger nail can cause bad electoral karma, of course he wants the bombing to avoid that, and to persuade Congress not to lift the arms embargo that he promised to lift when he was running for President.

But then, neither us, nor the psychopathic Serb leaders are convinced that the threat of airstrikes will be implemented. After the Munich *[surely "London"? Ed]* Agreement of 21 July, the Russians say no way, the US says that Akashi won't be involved. The British say he will, and so will General Janvier. On this, we side with the Yanks. A major contribution to Japan's economic success has been their ability to export megalomaniac but indecisive and invertebrate penpushers like Yasushi Akashi on to the international community. In Cambodia, he pandered to the genocidal Khmer Rouge, so he was eminently qualified for pandering to Karadzic's merry men when he turned up in the Balkans.

Of course, like Adolph Eichmann, Akashi is just following orders. Boutros Boutros Ghali seems to think that all you have to do is to negotiate with murderers, and maybe, eventually, out of boredom, they will stop killing and raping, and even keep their word for the week or so it would take to sell out the Bosnians diplomatically. As he says, for him there are 10 places in the world worse off than Sarajevo, and Srebrenica is just a small village, he told Africans last week. (Obviously he was buoyed by UN's good work in Rwanda, waiting until the Tutus had mostly been killed to allow the French in disguised as a UN force — to protect the murderers.)

So if the great minds of the West have a plan for the Balkans that will stop short of World War III, what is it? They are waiting for the invisible man, Slobodan Milosevic, to save the day. Why invisible? Well, what else do you call a brute who started the war, who rubbled Vukovar and shelled Dubrovnik, whose anti-aircraft system brought down a US plane, whose weapons are supplying Karadzic and his cronies, and whose treasury pays Mladic's officer corps — and has just seconded the commander of Krajina Serb Army — and yet is the West's peace maker of choice? Slobo can even confer his invisibility on other objects. Before your Lord Owen slipped out unobtrusively at the height of the hostage crisis, he had handpicked the international border monitors who now testify regularly that they can't see the Yugolslav tanks and fuel crossing the border, nor even the refugees kidnapped in the streets of Belgrade and sent as cannon fodder for the Serb armies in Bosnia and Croatia.

But then, if John Major, Bill Clinton and Jacques Chirac are so short-sighted that they can't see more than one opinion poll ahead, and make Pontius Pilate seem like a hands-on moralist, what's a little genocide between friends? We are only a far away country of which Neville Major may claim to know nothing — if he closes his eyes and ears to what's happening here.


JOHN KENT PRESENTS
JOHN MAJOR'S SENSATIONAL BIG TOP CIRCUS & MENAGERIE
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IT'S AGREED!
...WE SEND IN MORE HOSTAGES!

NEWS

How does Bank of England governor Eddie George cling to office? When deputy governor, he was a key player in the BCCI fiasco. Somehow, he, his governor Robin Leigh-Pemberton (who soon retired with the standard peerage) and senior officials such as Brian Quinn (still there), and Michael Foot (*sic* — still there) dodged all personal accountability.

"It is," boasted George recently at the select committee hearings about the new fiasco at Barings, "a criminal offence not to inform us, to advance this money without notifying us". Very well, then why has no one in Barings been prosecuted for not notifying the Bank of their advances to Singapore? The answer is barely credible. It is that the Bank had given Barings an "informal concession", waiving for nearly two years its iron rule banning "exposures" of more than 25 per cent of the bank's capital. Barings of course took every advantage of the "concession" — and poured a cool and ultimately calamitous 73 per cent of the bank's capital into the bottomless pit being dug by their blue-eyed "expert trader", Nick Leeson.

How was the "informal concession" granted? The recent inquiry by the Board of Banking Supervision could not find out. Not a single letter, document or memorandum, inside or outside the bank or Barings, can be found to prove it. Mr Christopher Thompson, a relatively junior manager at the Bank of England, told the inquiry that he personally had authorised the concession. He has hastily resigned with every prospect of a decent pension. But the Bank's guidelines for managers which he failed to follow at his peril specifically insist that any such concession must be referred, at least, to a head of division. The head of the division regulating all British banks was, and is, Carol Sergeant.

Thompson said he'd "mentioned the informal concession" to her. She said she couldn't remember any such thing. And no one even suggested that such a mighty concession involving the future of one of Britain's most prestigious banks might or should or must have have been referred up to Foot or Quinn or even to the Great Witch-Hunted Governor himself, Eddie George.

The inquiry managed to satisfy itself and the Chancellor (but no one else) that poor little Mr Thompson took the full burden of this vast decision on his own puny shoulders and that no one else was responsible. Then the entire City of London united to reassure the public that the Barings scandal was due to some minor incompetence among junior officials, and had nothing to do with the City's old boy network.

THE Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee seems certain to produce a damning report from its investigation of the curious circumstances surrounding the Roger Levitt fraud prosecution and plea-bargaining affair.

George Staple, the director of the Serious Fraud Office and David Cocks QC, already branded a "pathological liar" by Brian Sedgemore MP, will bear the brunt of the condemnation.

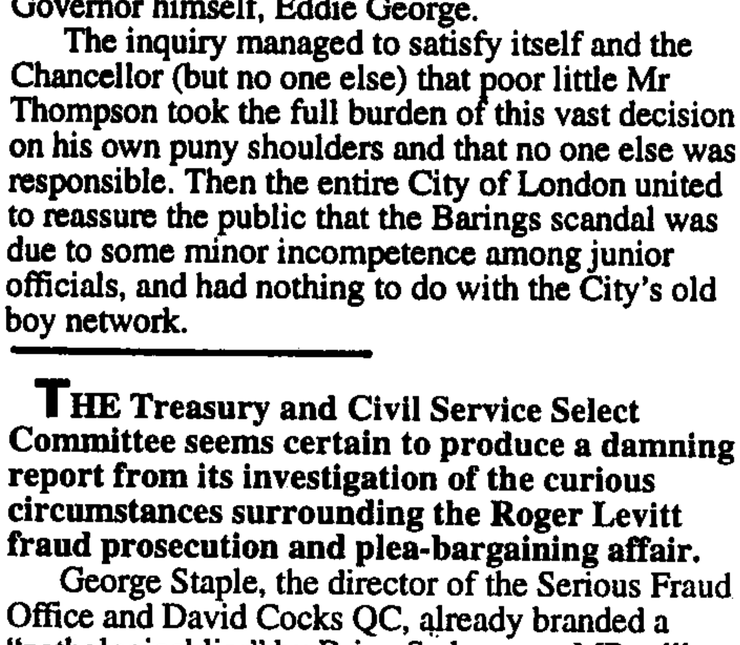
Cocks and his prosecuting team have claimed that when they discussed the matter of a guilty plea in the judge's room in November 1993 they had not known that Levitt would only plead guilty if he could be guaranteed a non-custodial sentence. However, the committee has received an interesting letter from another QC involved in the case, Desmond de Silva. "No one with ordinary hearing ability and a modest acquaintance with the English language," he has written, "could have left the Chambers of Laws J [Mr Justice Laws] on the 22 November with any impression other than that Levitt, through his counsel, had secured, in the event of pleas acceptable to the Crown, an indication of a non-custodial penalty from the trial judge."

Several senior barristers have written to individual MPs on the Committee suggesting that they initiate a complaint about Cocks to the professional conduct committee of the Bar Council. The MPs have agreed and will be joined in making the complaint by Levitt's solicitor.

The complaint will charge Cocks and his assistant barristers, Jonathan Fisher and Jane Bewsey (all of 5 King's Bench Walk) with misleading the Attorney-General into giving false answers in the House and with misleading the select committee in their written evidence. It will also charge Cocks with hypocrisy for attacking the trial judge in The *Times* and in two TV appearances when he knew all along that the trial judge had been bound to accept the deal Cocks had reached.

The role of Sir Derek Spencer, the Solicitor-General, is also likely to be criticised by the committee. Spencer is the second senior silk in the chambers at 5 King's Bench Walk, which Cocks heads. Despite an obvious conflict of interest, Spencer was responsible for clearing the misleading parliamentary answers given by the Attorney-General in early December 1993 denying that a plea-bargain had been struck.

Indeed, Spencer had been about to give the parliamentary answers on this matter himself until John Marshall MP, the questioner, had suggested that it would be inappropriate because he was a close colleague of Cocks. In June he held further meetings with the SFO and prosecuting counsel which decided on further misleading answers to questions from Mike O'Brien MP.



"If I were in my car I'd get REALLY angry with you!"

THREE years after Tarmac was given the Property Services Agency projects division by the Department of the Environment with a notorious goodwill dowry of £50 million, the Tory's favourite builders are looking to expand once more.

Back then John Redwood, as a minister at the Department of the Environment, agreed the payment to the builders, who are also coincidentally Tory donors. That same year the flagging firm was boosted when the Department of Transport awarded £112 million of its £262 million contracts to Tarmac.

Now TBV (Tarmac, Black and Veatch), the renamed PSA projects, want a slice of the lucrative building control market, most of which is still held by local authorities. All but the tiniest new building projects require a building control inspection, which makes it very big business indeed.

TBV has put a proposal for the contract to the DoE which must, in turn, be considered by the obscure Building Regulations Advisory Committee.

Other competitors for the building control market were furious to discover that one member of that committee is Ken Blount of TBV. And who should have observer status to the committee but Martyn Surman of TBV. The DoE told the *Eye* that Blount "has clearly stated his interest in approved inspectors [for Building Control], and at any time this issue is discussed his interest is noted and he plays no part in proceedings". This, the DoE assures us, also goes for Surman.

This must come as a huge relief to the 30 other bodies and individuals who are interested in taking on building control. However, it does not assure them that the TBV members actually leave the relevant meetings or that they do not get access to privileged information putting them ahead of their commercial rivals.

THE sell-by date for the Welsh Development Agency (WDA) draws nearer, thanks to the quango's curious dealings with Tesco, which has just opened a supermarket at Aberdare in the Cynon Valley.

The critical report of the Commons Public Accounts Committee (PAC) published earlier this month takes the agency to task for favouring the giant grocer over bids for the land on which the emporium is built.

The WDA bought the plot for around £1 million and put it up for sale. The Co-op offered £2.1 million and Tesco missed the deadline. But the WDA, acting in co-operation with Cynon Valley Borough Council, allowed Tesco to enter the list and the company obliged with a bid that topped the Co-op's by £50,000.

At the time of the shenanigans the chairman of the WDA was Gwyn (Golden Boyo) Jones, who was also a director of Tesco; and Tesco's managing director David Malpas was also on the WDA board. Naturally all this had nothing whatsoever to do with the out-of-time gazump.

The PAC also bollocked the WDA for shelling out £2.2 million in unauthorised redundancy and pension payments. One lucky employee received £15,500 instead of the £1,300 severance pay he was entitled to. Another got £24,700 instead of the £7,000 due.

PS: The WDA is short-staffed; deputy chairman Roy Bichan resigned a couple of weeks ago shortly before being charged with fraud involving Butte Mining, a company which he was once a director of.

"Dad – what's a clone?"

NEWS that the bidding process for the Channel Tunnel high-speed rail link is heavily biased in favour of Eurorail will come as no surprise to students of the tunnel's history.

From the moment she signed the Chunnel deal with former French President Mitterrand, Margaret Thatcher was keen to avoid big public spending on it.

In the summer of 1989 she promoted her friend and confidante Cecil Parkinson as Transport Secretary. He shared her concerns. At a conference organised by the *Financial Times* in May 1990, Parkinson attacked the "huge subsidies" which were necessary for the link, which would represent "unfair competition" for the airlines and ferries.

At the Tory party conference that year he poured scorn on Labour's plans for heavy investment in the link. "It would have involved," he said, "a cash grant of £500m, £400m of additional public expenditure and and a £1 billion loan. Only a socialist government can afford that deal." There were howls of applause from the faithful.

Parkinson left for the House of Lords when Thatcher was sacked the following month. Under a new Transport Secretary, John Macgregor, the line shifted a little. Today the link is expected to cost, er, at least £700m a year in public money, and the private companies involved in the link are expecting at least a £1 billion loan — rather more in total than the "socialist" free-spending derided by Parkinson in 1990.

Who will benefit from the new government largesse? Here are two likely candidates:

1) Eurorail, the favourite for the tunnel link contract. The chairman of Eurorail is, er, Lord Parkinson.

2) Hill Samuel merchant bank, which is linked to the bankers for Eurorail, and which has two directors on the government adjudication panel which will award the contract. A famous director of Hill Samuel is, ahem, John MacGregor.

WHEN Sir Richard Greenbury and his fellow committee members go to the Treasury they will be expecting a bollocking for the confusion over their recommendations.

Kenneth Clarke has ordered them to "explain what your views are" after Sir Richard's admission that the change in rules on taxing share options would, er, be a mistake after all.

But Sir Richard, chairman of Marks and Spencer, may find the grilling easier than expected. Chief questioner will be Michael Jack, new Financial Secretary to the Treasury. He is not unrelated to the Michael Jack who once worked for M&S as p.a. to Sir Derek Rayner, former joint managing director.

ONE clue to the Government's future policy on Bosnia may be held by David Hart, the crackpot former bankrupt who entertains important people at his sumptuous manor in Suffolk and has a vast (if largely-unshared) view of his own influence in high places.

There are two Cabinet ministers who do not share the widespread scepticism about Hart. The first is Malcolm Rifkind, to whom Hart acted as "unpaid occasional adviser" at the Ministry of Defence — an official government category in which Hart was officially placed in a Commons answer last February.

The other Cabinet minister who admires Hart is Michael Portillo, a regular guest at Hart's manor since Polly was a junior minister at the Department of Transport. (Hart tried at one stage to become an official adviser to British Rail, but was shown the door by the chairman, Sir Bob Reid).

Hart is a Serbo-phile. Not long ago, in the *Spectator*, he called for an alliance between Britain and the Serbs to sort out the former Yugoslavia. This may not immediately become the policy of the new Foreign Secretary Rifkind or the new Defence Secretary Portillo, but it might explain a certain softness in official policy towards the Serbs.

Portillo and Rifkind should beware, however. Hart's political allegiances are still with the Reagan's old CIA, especally its late deranged director Bill Casey. Casey and Co regarded all Muslims as "Communists", and were inclined to side with anyone who would stamp on them.

New thinking in the CIA, if no more sophisticated, is more in line with old cold war allegiances — ie, "Russia loves Serbia, therefore we hate Serbia". If Rifkind and Portillo become converts to the latest fanaticism of their unofficial adviser, they could find themselves out on a limb with their oldest ally.

ROY PAINTER, a former racialist parliamentary candidate, now one of Michael Portillo's keenest Enfield Southgate constituency supporters, is having a bit of trouble with the free market he adores.

A died-in-the-wool racialist, Painter joined the Tories in the late 1970s after failing to seize control of the National Front, for which he fought the elections of 1974. He features prominently as a leader of the Front's "Populist" faction in a 1977 book on the NF by the *Guardian*'s Martin Walker.

Painter's security firm, Abbey Corporate Total Services, went into liquidation last year owing £579,574, including £168,865 in PAYE contributions which he failed to pass on to the Inland Revenue, who are expected to petition to make him personally bankrupt.

Curiously, a company with the same initials, ACTS (A Corporate Total Service) was formed just a month before the other ACTS went into liquidation. This was also a security firm and Painter was closely involved in it. It had a lucrative contract from Enfield Council to guard an old listed building — a contract which was abruptly terminated earlier this year when the leader of the council visited the building at night and discovered one of the security guards asleep.

Painter has always been a keen supporter of Michael Portillo and has organised lunches to introduce the MP to local businessmen. He also provided the security for the lavish Alexandra Palace celebrations of Portillo's first 10 years in Parliament. He was one of the many local Portillo fans who begged their hero not to vote for John Major in the recent leadership elections.

LABOUR has made a complete hash of selecting a candidate for the key Tory marginal seat of Leeds North East.

The local party got into Tony Blair's good books by opting to have a women-only shortlist, without any of the arm-twisting necessary elsewhere. So pleased was Labour's National Executive at the prospect of a media-friendly Blurite being selected that it allowed the media in to cover the normally behind-closed-doors selection meeting.

Blair didn't dream that t'comrades would proceed to reject the four nice local women on the shortlist in favour of Liz Davies, a hard-left councillor from Islington who refused to pay the Poll Tax and lent her support to the campaign to free Winston Silcott.

The leader is reported to have "gone ballistic" when he heard the news. With the NEC due to meet to decide whether to endorse Davies as the *Eye* went to press, Labour apparatchiks have been desperately scouring Davies's political cupboard in search of skeletons that could bar her selection.

Chief Labour spin-doctor Peter Mandelson was put on the case, planting anti-Davies stories in the *Yorkshire Post*, the *Daily Mail* and the *Times*, one of which was to the effect that Davies had tried to conceal her Poll Tax defiance from the selection committee. Alas Davies had been filmed by Yorkshire Television asserting her leftie credentials and had written to Leeds party members boasting about her Poll Tax record. Hasty retractions were printed.

Blair's antipathy to Davies may perchance be related to that of his Islington neighbour and chum Margaret Hodge, MP for Barking and former Islington Council leader. Hodge bears numerous grudges against Davies, from having the temerity to challenge her for the council leadership in 1992, to criticising Hodge's handling of the Islington child abuse scandal in a *New Spartsperson* article this year. Hodge has been desperately briefing the press and probably bending her neighbour's pointy ear, too.

As the rumpus goes on, the Tory incumbent in Leeds, Timothy "Invisible Man" Kirkhope, is looking well pleased.

THE question of wimmin-only shortlists is proving troublesome in Murkeyside, too, where Labour big-wigs have decreed that three out of Liverpool's five parliamentary seats will be fought by the sisters.

In the Riverside constituency, the choice of Louise Ellman — currently leader of Lancashire County Council — was greeted with stony silence from those at the final selection meeting, forcing the regional party hack to inquire: "You've just selected your parliamentary candidate! Aren't you happy?" Only one person applauded the announcement — Ellman's husband, Gerry.

Ellman didn't speak well on the night, but a strong postal vote from Bingo-playing pensioners in the right-wing Catholic fiefdom of Vauxhall was enough to put the nomination in the bag.

On entering the Commons, Ellman will be busy filling in the register of members' interests. The would-be "new girl" is very busy — holding no fewer than 23 directorships, the most interesting being vice-chairman of Lancashire Enterprises PLC.

This company — privatised in 1989 — has since made loadsamoney fulfilling contracts for its main client, Lancashire County Council. Company chairman James Mason has seen his fees increase tenfold to more than £50,000, and has a personal shareholding worth around £200,000.

Ellman's opponents, who regard her narrow victory over a local candidate as a carve-up orchestrated by North-West Regional Labour Party officials, dislike the way she has embraced privatisation and the virtues of the market economy. They are also concerned by the fact that a company once owned by a local authority now has as its major shareholder one Owen Oyston, who holds over 2½ million shares in Lancashire Enterprises PLC.

Many have said that the quality of Murkeyside's male MPs in the past is the best possible argument for all-women shortlists. One only has to think of Kilroy-Silk as an example. Sadly, history has a habit of turning a bad situation into something even more dire.

TONY BLAIR, mesmerised by middle England, is less than happy with the way his Welsh MPs are carrying on.

Led by Ron Davies, the tough-minded shadow Welsh Secretary, the 27 members from across Offa's Dyke boycotted the first appearance at the Despatch Box of William Hague, MP for Richmond and the Tories' latest viceroy in Wales. So — an easy ride for Hague, known in Wales as "The Yorkshire Nipper". And much annoyance in the Labour leader's camp.

Blairites also express concern at Davies' enthusiasm for a Welsh parliament instead of the watery assembly Tony wants.

There are rumblings that a replacement for Davies is being sought. The name of Kim Howells, MP for Pontypridd and a noted climber (*inter alia* of mountains) is whispered. Howells made his name as the NUM official who, after a blazing row with President Scargill, helped to engineer a return to work at the end of the 1985 miner's strike.

Come the elections for the Shadow Cabinet in a few months' time it will be interesting to observe the arm-twisting employed to ensure Comrade Kim's elevation.

LABOUR'S candidate in the Littleborough and Saddleworth by-election, the diminutive Phil Woolas, has been touting himself as the God-fearing, church-going, anti-drugs candidate, the very epitome of Blair man.

Woolas would know all about the perils of smoking dope, having been a regular patron of many wild Manchester University parties in the early Eighties. Of course Woolas, like his hero Bill Clinton, never inhaled. Nor did his best chum John Mann, later a Lambeth Labour councillor and now education officer for the TUC.

Among his old classmates Woolas is best remembered for his memorable catchphrase "Do you fancy a grope?", uttered to any female student within earshot, particularly the daughter of an erstwhile Labour cabinet minister. Uncharitable contemporaries said he was trying to sleep his way to the top but, unfortunately, the former minister in question soon defected to the SDP.

CRUEL Labour MPs are looking forward to the Christmas launch of the Department of Transport's traditional drink-driving campaign, when newly-appointed transport minister Sir George Young will have to deliver the usual homilies about the evils of drinking and driving.

Unknown to many MPs, Sir Georgsh was so pissed when driving home in August 1987 that he drove into a motorway crash barrier. The bicycling baronet bravely drove on until a passing panda car flagged him down.

After his arrest it was found that Youngsh' alcohol reading was more than double the limit. Beaconsfield magistrates, unswayed by the gallant knight's high standing, fined him and banned him from driving for 15 months.

'Backbiter'

Street of Shame

ANDREW NEILL, the delightful French Riviera landowner, has fallen victim to an unpleasant smear campaign by journalists on the down-market *Daily Mail*. They are obviously jealous of his talent as a columnist and the high regard in which he is held by the paper's sophisticated editor, Paul Dacre.

Andrew attended the *Mail*'s summer party in Hampton Court gardens in the company of an Asian beauty called Sam Afzaal. At one point the unrelenting heat prompted her to step into a cooling fountain, with the result that her skirt rode up to reveal Nature's blessings.

Later in the evening the couple, who had simply been admiring some rare shrubs, were seen emerging from the bushes, with the result that several filthy-minded cynics started saying that Andrew had been "discussing the prospects for Hugh Grant's films in Uganda".

All I can say is that Lord Rothermere, Sir David English, Paul Dacre and other senior members of the *Mail* hierarchy had a more mature reaction to what was plainly an innocent gambol in the gardens.

READERS of the *Sunday Mirror*'s stories about the relationship between former Tory cabinet minister Jonathan Aitken and a former professional dominatrix may be intrigued to learn the background.

9 July: The *Smirror* ran a story about an unnamed ex-hooker who claimed to have had an affair with Aitken. Crucial to the decision to publish was a 40-minute tape-recorded phone conversation between Aitken and the woman, which indicated that they had known each other intimately. However, the recording did not bear out any of the woman's other claims. Prior to publication, however, Aitken's solicitor, Richard Sykes, told the *Sunday Mirror* that his client would definitely not sue if the paper confined itself to alleging that he had been involved in an extra-marital affair with the woman and that he had not been aware of her activities as a professional dominatrix. The ex-hooker was paid £10,000 rather than the £25,000 first offered, because she refused to be named and was only photographed from behind.

16 July: The paper decided to have another bite at the cherry. This time the ex-hooker, Paula Strudwick, agreed to be named and posed for photographs (presumably in return for the remainder of her fee). The story started with a description of a "three-in-a-bed sex romp" involving a woman police doctor, Christine Pickard, and a "well-known businessman". Who could this be?

Strudwick had also provided the paper with a video of a conversation with Pickard in which they had discussed Aitken. Indeed, the article was written in a very odd way, saying at one point that Aitken had once quizzed Dr Pickard "about her attitude to S&M".

All this accords with the statement in the leaked fax to Aitken from his PR adviser Patrick Robertson saying that "at least three papers are sniffing around something disgusting (i.e. worse than extra-marital sex".

POOR John Witherow, editor of the *Sunset Times*. The very week after he published his grovelling apology to Michael Foot, he had to print another even more grovelling one to Shelter.

On 2 July, Witherow had published a page lead attacking Shelter's plans to buy a "lavish" new centre in London. Whoops! Shelter are buying the not very lavish place they've been in since 1987 — and are saving £40,000 a year as a result. A single solicitor's letter from Shelter was enough to draw an immediate grovel, which accepted that there was "no truth" in any of the main allegations in the piece. The *Sunday Times* agreed to pay legal costs and to pay also for the circulation of their grovel to all Shelter supporters.

LORD Stevens of Ludgate, faced with plummeting circulation on all his *Express* titles, came up with the kind of solution only an over-paid tycoon could — keep the piss-poor editors, but fire most of the staff.

Two hundred and twenty hacks and production staff (15 per cent of the work force) are to be laid off. But even the cowed, semi-literate hacks spotted a slight discrepancy in their "Dear John" letters from management. All redundancies will be voluntary, stated the missive, adding a few lines later that anyone dissatisfied with this "voluntary" arrangement could go through a "grievance procedure".

HOW to cover the harrowing war in Bosnia in the down-market, down-in-the-dumps *Sunday Getsmuchworse*?

Features Editor Peter Birkett came up with a brilliant idea: "Holiday on Adriatic coast of former Yugoslavia — only an hour from ethnic cleansing!" Roly-poly reporter Mark Porter was briefed. "Take the office flak-jacket," advised Birkett. "It's ace for pulling birds."

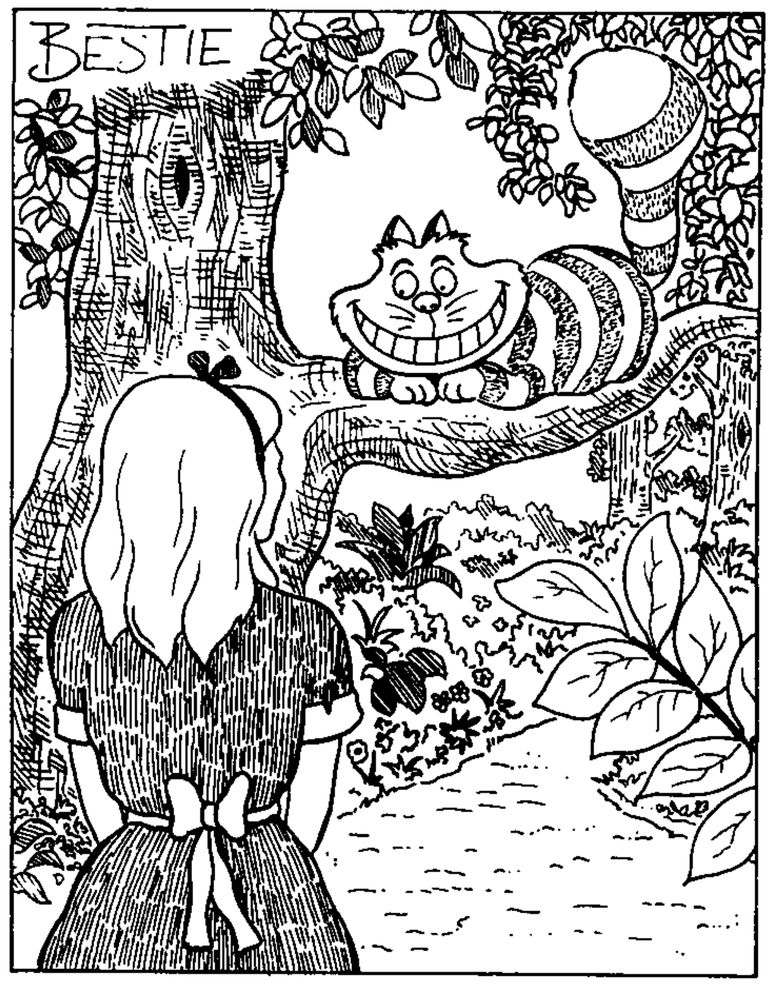
No thanks, bravely demurred the bespectacled (and happily married to alluring former royal hackette Grania Forbes) reporter. On Sunday, however, Porter sneaked in and took the jacket.

On Tuesday, the aspirant war correspondent made an appearance in the office prior to heading for Heathrow, only to face... 1) the announcement of mass redundancies across the Depress group; 2) a severe bollocking for taking a £1,000 cash advance, and 3) the news that his Adriatic assignment was cancelled.

NO HACK has a more sure grip on world events than the *Mirror*'s legendary deputy editor, Brendan "Chucky" Parsons.

As temperatures began to soar last Wednesday Chucky was once again on top of the hot story. Despite a record high of 93 degrees on 30 June, Chucky had been reading about heat-wave deaths in the USA. He instructed his news desk to compile an authoritative estimate of the huge number of fatalities that could be expected throughout Britain. He could already see Thursday's screaming headline: "HUNDREDS TO FRY AND DIE TODAY".

Alas, given the timidity at the top of the great people's organ, this classic of visionary journalism disgracefully never got into print.



The Cheshire Cat explained to Alice that he was a great admirer of Tony Blair

THE *Independent* has already bravely demonstrated its right to that grand title by "shedding" many of its best hacks. Last week, editor Ian Hargreaves gave further proof when hauled up before Mr Justice Phillips, presiding over the Maxwell trial. The newspaper had committed the vile sin of publishing a picture of the late (*completely-innocent-till-proven guilty*) tycoon, with a caption that stated Capt'n Bob had "plundered" the *Mirror* pension fund.

While a hang-dog Hargreaves looked on, his counsel explained to the furious judge: "The *Independent*'s lawyers, Your Honour, do not read all sections of the paper."

Very few people do, of course, and who can blame them? So the wretched Hargreaves was let off with a gentle reprimand.

JUSTINE PICARDIE, the *Independent on Sunday*'s "Worse than William Leith" whimsy columnist, was elated when she found a message on her desk saying "Please call A., Jaspan".

Presuming that he wished to lure her away from the miseries of Canary Wharf to join his brave new *Observer*, she promptly returned the call.

However, there was no job offer, only a whining complaint that his wife had been packing the last of their gewgaws for the journey from Jaspan Towers, on the banks of the Forth, to their new abode in London's trendy Crouch End when she had read Picardie's latest column about life in the area — describing how she had been threatened by a knife-wielding yob in her local park.

"My wife's having second thoughts about re-locating," Jaspan explained anxiously. "Do you think you could ring her up to reassure her — and perhaps write another column singing the praises of Crouch End and saying what a wonderful, villagey atmosphere it has?"

Writing columns about Crouch End is, of course, Picardie's *metier*, so the paean to the area, inspired by "an acquaintance", duly appeared, complete with reference to the Crouch End Festival Chorus. Meanwhile, Picardie still dreams of re-locating from Hell Tower to Farringdon Road.

FOR YEARS Nigel Pratt-Dumpster has filled yards of his unintelligible *Daily Mail* "diary" by knocking stories from other newspapers ("it is quite untrue what the downmarket *Daily Grope* reported yesterday", etc, etc). On 4 July, Dumpster excelled himself by correcting a rival's spelling.

Alas, in this professorial paragraph, Dempster blithers, "the bride's mother could not *bare* to see a drop of the vintage claret wasted."

Private I-I-I!

THIS ISSUE'S rundown of the nation's most self-obsessed columnists, based on the number of incidences of the word "I" per column-inch.

		Ego Rating
1	Alix Sharkey (Independent 15/7)	3.06
2	Nigella Lawson (Spectator 22/7)	2.09
3	Simon Sickbag Montefiasco (E. Standard 12/7)	1.76
4	Petronella Wyatt (S. Tel. 23/7)	1.74
5	Jimmy Greaves (Sun 22/7)	1.70
6	Simon Gray (Sunday Times 23/7)	1.66
7	Zöe Heller (Sunday Times 23/7)	1.44
8	Decca Aitkenhead (IoS 23/7)	1.20
9	Michael Winner (NotW 23/7)	1.17
10	"Dr" John Diamond (Times 22/7)	1.00

Bubblin' under: Jonathan Woss, Jan Moir, Barbara Toner, Justine Picardie.

A Doctor wrI-I-ites

THIS week's winner: Theodore Dalrymple (Spectator 22/7).

Number of referrals to self = 11

Number of patients "treated" = 2

HARPIES QUEENY

TERRY MANSFIELD, the cheery former barrow-boy who is managing director of the National Magazine Company, is apparently pleased with a report by a team of marketing experts whom he hired to divine what has gone wrong with *Harpers & Queen* (answer: lacklustre editorial — no fee required).

The magazine's editor, Fiona "The Governess" McPherson, was recently obliged to attend a meeting at which Mansfield introduced her to the senior marketing analyst responsible for the report. He held aloft a can of Coca-Cola and invited them to consider it. "You can change what's on the inside," he explained, "but you mustn't change the outside."

After more sage-like utterances he reached his conclusion: "*Harpers & Queen* needs to appeal to a more working-class audience." McPherson maintained a thin smile throughout (she practises this in front of her bathroom mirror), while the dunderhead Mansfield beamed with pride.

QUEEN MUM EYE SHOCK

HALLO! THE HEARTWARMING COLUMN

HALLO! SIR James Goldsmith is joining forces with his Asian dude son-in-law, Imran Khan, to promote their new family interests in Pakistan.

There were some unfriendly mutterings there when it was noticed that Imran's Islamic bride had blonde hair and a Jewish father. To counter any damage to Imran's political ambitions in Pakistan his followers came up with a cunning plan. They are translating Sir Jams' new political book *The Trap* into Urdu, and preparing a print-run of tens of thousands.

Muslim readers will be cheered to discover the previously little-reported fact that Goldsmith is actually a zealous defender of Islam. In *The Trap* he calls religious wars "a natural reaction against the excessive intrusion of Western nationalism" and goes on to say that Iran is a country where the West unsuccesfully tried to impose its culture. Up the Ayatollah!

With allies like Goldenballs, Imran and his fair bride can prepare for certain political success.

HALLO! TO San Francisco with Princess Margaret for the boozy round of extravaganzas to mark 50 glorious years of the United Nations. As Queen Brenda's representative, Margaret partied dutifully.

Indeed, so intent was Ma'am on celebrating that when entertained by barmy zillionaire Gordon Getty at the PlumpJack restaurant, which did not have a full hard liquor licence, a special one-day permit had to be obtained so she could take a wee dram. Doubtless honouring the UN's heroic triumph in Bosnia, Margaret made regal use of this dispensation.

Ma'am was in particularly high spirits for the mother of all UN beanos, an afternoon ceremony at San Francisco's Grace Cathedral. But her sunny mood changed when the Archbishop asked the assembled dignitaries, as a show of world-wide solidarity, to hold hands with the person next to them. Even the ridiculous Boutros Boutros-Ghali clasped sweet little Desmond Tutu to his bosom.

Brenda's well-fuelled sister, however, took one look at her neighbour, the UN's Chief of Protocol, with his sweaty palm outstretched. "Oh," sniffed Margaret fastidiously, "I really don't think so."

HALLO! *MY ERUDITE smoking companion, Ian Botham, is furious at suggestions that on a recent business trip to New York he was stopped at the airport and strip-searched. The very idea!*

While Ian has had his problems with the authorities over cannabis resin (fined £100 for possession in 1985, and banned from cricket for two months in 1986) he has, of course, put all that sort of thing behind him.

Ian was travelling with his chum Viv Richards, the former West Indian cricket captain.

Doubtless, like the Big Apple canard, just a puff of smoke.

HALLO! LORD Palumbo's heroic mission to keep alive the spirit of the Great Gatsby will not be deterred by the carping criticisms of lesser mortals. The former chairman of the Arts Council is one of our great private patrons, too.

So alarmed at Palumbo's liberality with the £70 million family trust fund were son James and daughter Annabella — unreasonably, in my view — that they took a successful High Court action to put a break on his spending (£13 million on cars, wines, houses, etc). New trustees are examining past expenditure, including a £263,000 donation to the Tories — who surely deserve the money, if anyone does!

Now I hear of a charming musical evening for a select group of *illuminati*, including film director Bryan Forbes and his beautiful wife Nanette Newman, at His Lordship's country mansion. After a munificent repast, Palumbo ushered his guests out of the dining room for a concert by the Oscar Peterson Trio.

One guest later asked the virtuoso American jazz pianist how he came to be performing in front of what must have been his smallest-ever audience.

"If the price is right," growled Peterson, "we'll play anywhere!"

HALLO! BEWARE of people called Powell who do not pronounce their names correctly. We know all about Baroness Thatcher's former favourite adviser, the insufferably snobbish Sir Charles Powell (pronounced *Pole*, to rhyme with *prole*). Now I discover the skeleton in the closet of the next President of the United States — former chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, Colin (*Co-lin*) Powell.

In 1969, then a mere major, Powell was the officer assigned by the Pentagon to investigate rumours of a massacre in Vietnam, at My Lai, by a certain Lt. Calley and Charlie Company. The gallant major reported that accounts of any massacre were "a malicious fiction".

Powell for President!

HALLO! MY FRIEND Norman Lamont has been the target of much unfair and malicious sniping ever since he was unceremoniously ejected from the Treasury by his erstwhile friend John Major.

So it was with sympathy and affection that I encountered him at a party hosted by Nicholas Freeman, the cigar importer. Apart from the abundant fine wines, which Norman was good enough to taste, there were flunkeys bearing humidors full of cigars. One guest who saw Norman take three cigars at once sourly objected. This is the sort of boorish behaviour Norman has to put up with all the time nowadays. "What's the matter?" he replied. "They're free, aren't they?" Quite right.

HALLO! I WAS shocked by the way the *Mail on Sunday* recently sought to turn a perfectly innocent and humorous phone conversation between the much-misunderstood Darius Guppy and his journalist friend Boris Johnson into a sinister conspiracy to commit assault.

All I can say is that I remember meeting Darrie at a dinner party with Boris several years ago. He was very late and his arrival was anticipated with enthusiasm. He had already explained that he would be late because he was busy composing an epic poem about London in the Eighties. When he arrived and began to declaim his poem, we were hardly able to contain our delight. He was so charming.

'The Marquesa'

EYE TV

The Weekend Show (BBC1)

Steve Wright's People Show (BBC1)

WHEN Alan Yentob said he thought *Noel's House Party* was the most important programme on his network, no one really believed him. But whether or not Yentob did believe his own assertion, he has certainly acted upon it. Nowadays it seems as though every new entertainment show is a scaled-down version of Crinkley Bottom, with scaled-down ambitions, scaled-down budgets and, most important of all, scaled-down ratings.

The Weekend Show is the latest of many failed attempts to kick off the weekend with a chatty, lively, showbiz-heavy magazine show when everyone would just prefer another episode of *EastEnders*. The host is Dale Winton, permatanned cult idol of *Supermarket Sweep*, whose sudden elevation to the ranks of stardom does not seem to have developed his ability to say "No" to any job he is offered. While Winton sits behind his Letterman desk, wondering what to say next, chirpy co-hosts Liza Tarbuck (daughter of Jimmy) and Daley Thompson perch on a nearby sofa with the disastrously chosen guest of the week.

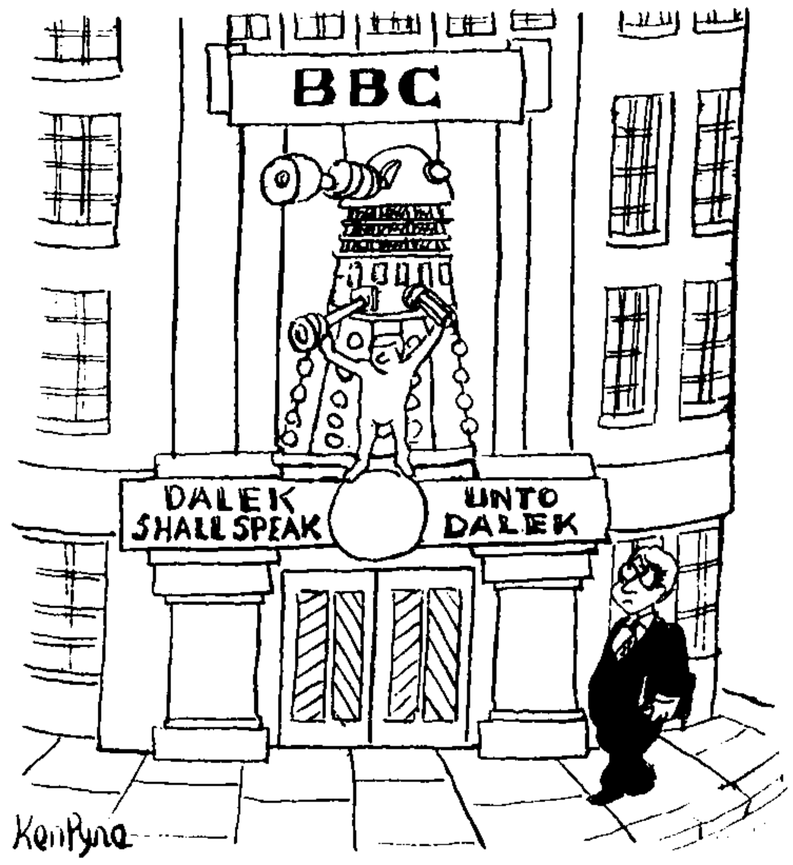
Filmed items flit past, never entertaining you quite as much as you think they are going to, and the disastrously chosen guest gives his learned opinion on each, although it usually turns out that he or she doesn't have one. Early on in the series Arsenal goalkeeper David Seaman was in the hot seat, even though it was clear that no researcher had established whether or not he was capable of coherent speech. He wasn't, and the resulting non-interview set the tone of the rest of the series. Even *Channel 4 News*' ratings are thought to have benefitted.

Last week *The Weekend Show* abruptly disappeared from the schedules, to be replaced with a quiz show presented by Paul Daniels.

The Steve Wright People Show is bigger, brighter, more expensive — and equally misconceived. Wright has long been pop radio's brightest light, but as Terry Wogan discovered, an intimate radio style is quickly found wanting amidst the hullaballoo of a fast-paced TV light entertainment show. And no show in recent memory has been quite as fleet of foot as the *People Show*. Items whizz before the eyes and are gone again. Guests sprint onto the stage, because every second wasted negotiating the *People Show* stairs is a second less on-screen. This is a show that's terrified of boring you. It'll try anything to keep your attention. Wright goes along with it all, giggling nervously every 30 seconds or so, but the frenetic pace never manages to stop you wondering what it's all for.

For this, of course, is precisely the question these shows don't want you to ask. There *is* no purpose behind *Noel's House Party*, no reason for it to exist at all. But because it passes an amiable 50 minutes each week, this is not something you think about too closely. *The Weekend Show* and *The Steve Wright People Show* don't get away so lightly. Deprived of any obvious *raison d'être*, they exist in a vacuum. You see the effort put into making them fun, but the fun itself remains elusive. What you can see is the terror in Dale Winton's eyes after each witless film report, or Steve Wright bobbing in front of his audience, wondering whether leaving Radio 1 was such a good idea after all.

'Square Eyes'



JANET Street-Porter, the orthodontically-challenged boss of the Mirror Group Newspapers' Live TV cable channel, has been awarded a signal honour by television industry worthies.

She has been asked to deliver this year's MacTaggart Lecture at the Edinburgh Television Festival, although the prospect of sitting through 40 minutes or so of Street-Walker's tortured vowels may prove too much for some regular attenders of this event.

Her first reaction on hearing of her good fortune was to approach MGN's chief executive, David Montgomery, and request £1,000 to pay for a speech-writer. Rommel's response was categorical: she could write "her own bloody speech".

HAVING made such a success (in his own estimation) of reforming the Beeb, director-general John Birt has been telling friends that he harbours a greater ambition — to reform the National Health Service.

When this was reported to Labour leader Tony Blair and his press secretary Alastair Campbell, they both fell about laughing.

MEDIA NEWS

IN HIS "Radio Waves" column in the *Sunday Times*, Paul Donovan recently extolled the virtues of Radio 2's new controller, James Moir.

"Fatty" Moir was a surprise signing, since he had been sidelined by the BBC into corporate affairs after a long career in light entertainment. Three other heavyweight candidates from radio had been shortlisted and all of them had been forced to write huge Birtian theses about the future of Radio 2 for their interviews. However, in true Birt style, the bullshit meant nothing when confronted with worry about ratings. The worthy candidates were leapfrogged at the last minute by Fatty, who did not have to produce any flip-charts or detailed analysis of the radio market. He was just given the job in the vague hope that, since he had once recruited Noel Edmonds, he might be able to get some listeners for the ageing station.

According to Donovan "this is a brilliant choice". Moir is "jovial and unpretentious" and what's more "he really does know and understand performers".

He then quotes Terry Wogan praising Moir as "one of the funniest men in the world". What Donovan fails to mention is that he himself has a job as an occasional presenter on Radio 2. Why does one have a feeling that whoever had been appointed would be described by Donovan as "a brilliant choice"?

WORLD OF HYPE

THERE appears to have been a falling-out between *News of the Screws* editor Piers Morgan and the king of the kiss-and-tells, PR man Max Clifford.

Clifford has boasted that Morgan owes his career to him, and that awards Morgan has received were for stories given to him on a plate by the PR man. Clifford mischievously told the *Evening Standard*'s Londoner's Diary that Morgan was making a record with Gazza's girlfriend, Sheryl. Now Clifford has told the *Times* that he was behind the buy-up of Hugh Grant's hooker, Divine Brown, by the *Screws* and that he is to bring her along to the London premiere of Grant's new movie *Nine Months*.

Wogan's Island
YES, IT'S OLD TEL HERE IN MY REAL HOME...
A PLACE I LOVE WITH IT'S FLOWING WATERS, LITTLE PUBS, LUSH GREENERY...
PEOPLED WITH THOSE FOLK CLOSEST TO MY HEART...
WHERE I KNOW I TRULY BELONG
BRAY-ON-THAMES!
THE WATERSIDE INN
"Top of the mornin' Parky!"
"Be Jesus & it's Rolf!"
"Begorra! It's Michel Roux!"
"It's me old sniffer Franky Bough!"
Ken Pyne

OPERA GROUSE

ANYONE irritated by the ease with which the Royal Opera House has got more than £50m from the National Lottery (mainly money from the poor) to refurbish its buldings (used almost exclusively by the rich) might like to get hold of a satirical pamphlet entitled *Il Rigmarole Della Case D'Opera Regale.*

It puts the case very well against the refurbishment and the ridiculous shenanigans at the ROH. But anyone who tries to get it must run the risk of a letter threatening legal action.

Copies of the pamphlet were handed out by opponents of the refurbishment scheme outside the Royal Opera House on 14 June. At once the Covent Garden Community Association, which declares its responsibility for the pamphlet, got a long solicitor's letter from expensive City lawyers DJ Freeman, who are also solicitors to Viv Duffield, daughter of the former property millionaire Charles Clore and board member of the Royal Opera House and the Royal Ballet.

The letter noted that the "publication purports to be and is in the style of an official Royal Opera House publication". They notice for instance that the colours are the one used by ROH programmes — red and gold. "It is not permitted," boomed Freemans "to reproduce a royal coat of arms without specific permission from Crown." The pamphlet, they said, was clearly "a breach of our client's copyright". Though no proceedings would be issued now, "further publications will be carefully considered with a view to possible proceedings".

The immediate response of the CGCA to this pompous piffle was to produce and distribute yet more pamphlets!

The Crook, The Spectator, The Journalist, Her Husband, The Other Journalist And His 'Mentor'

THE recent *Mail on Sunday* **piece by Marcus "Soldier Boy" Scriven about the criminal conspiratorial activities of Boris "Hitman" Johnson, an associate editor of the** *Daily Torygraph*, **and his old school and university friend, jailed fraudster Darius Guppy, has ruffled rather a lot of feathers.**

It has almost certainly shut off the *Torygraph* as a career avenue for Scriven, a former hack on that paper's "Peterbore" column who was recently sacked from the editorship of the *Evening Standard*'s "Londoner's Diary". It has also damaged "Hitman", who was being groomed for greater things in the *Torygraph* hierarchy.

A tape-recorded phone conversation from 1990 has Darius Guppy telling Johnson that no one he has met is "as psychopathic potentially as me" and asking Johnson to find out the home address of a troublesome *News of the Screws* journalist, Stuart Collier, so Guppy can arrange for the hack to receive a good hiding. Johnson agrees to furnish the address on the understanding that Collier will not be beaten up too badly and that his own role in providing the address will never get out. "OK Darrie," he finally concedes, "I said I'll do it and I'll do it. Don't worry." The planned attack on Collier never took place.

The Scriven article incensed the *Torygraph*'s high-minded, carrot-haired deputy editor, Simon Heffer, by describing him as Hitman's "mentor", an unsavoury association in the circumstances.

This is not the first time Guppy's friends have recklessly sprung to his aid. In 1992 an *Economist* hackette called Ann Applebaum wrote an inane attack in the *Spectator* on gossip columnists and other hacks who were supposedly driven by motives of envy to knock achievers. A prime example of such bad faith, she argued, was the inordinate and gloating press interest in the trial for a £1.8 million insurance fraud of Darius Guppy, primarily because he had been best man at Earl Spencer's wedding. The *Economist* allowed Applebaum to write for the *Spectator* on condition that she used a pseudonym ("Veronica Lodge"), which conveniently meant that she did not have to declare an interest. Her husband, Radek Sikorski, is Guppy's best friend and she was plainly *parti pris*, even to the point of fatuously declaring that "as fraud trials go, it was a small one". Applebaum has since succeeded Simon Heffer as deputy editor of the *Spectator* and now has a dreary column in the *Torygraph* (commissioned by Heffer).

Since the *Mail on Sunday* article was published, "Hitman" has been looking particularly sheepish — after all, aiding and abetting an assault on a fellow hack is hardly in keeping with the High Tory tradition of Lord Deedes, T. E. Utley, Charles Moore, etc. Meanwhile, the supremely self-important Heffer felt impelled to consult m'learned friends about whether to sue for libel over Scriven's description of him as Boris's "mentor". He also complained to Sir David English, chairman of Associated Newspapers.

The gratuitous inclusion of Heffer in the article was no doubt approved by Jonathan Holborow, the *MoS*'s editor. In the fervid rumour mill that is Northcliffe House, the wild suggestion has been circulating that Sir David English is so enamoured of Heffer that he has offered him the job not only of *Daily Mail* associate editor (politics) but also of editor of the *Mail on Sunday*.

MENSA NEWS

FINANCIAL misdemeanours, sackings, and police investigations have split Mensa, the organisation for people with (allegedly) high IQs.

Mensa members were shocked to hear that their secretary, John McNulty, had been suspended pending financial investigations into payments he had authorised. These included bills for computer equipment, excessive telephone bills charged to Mensa and bills for the transportation of personal belongings to America. No explanation has been provided despite repeated requests by members.

Nigel Tinsley, Mensa's chief financial officer, finally handed the bills over to Inspector Knacker after his requests for an internal inquiry had been ignored for three months. The bills remain unpaid, and credit agencies are now pursuing Mensa for payment of the rogue invoices.

It was reported some months ago that the chief executive of Mensa, Harold Gale, had been sacked for external business activities after he had questioned payments of the bills. He has taken his case to industrial tribunal. Then, David Torvell, managing director of Mensa Administration, circulated a list of questions from members about Mensa's finances. His company was disenfranchised from Mensa soon afterwards. A committee member who said he intended to make a full report into the financial situation has been subject to a committee vote of no-confidence.

SIGNAL FAILURES

FIRST, the good news. It was revealed last week (18 July) that the Government is pumping £250 million into the Passenger Transport Executives (PTEs) which provide local rail services in West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, Greater Manchester, Merseyside, the West Midlands and Greater Glasgow.

The bad news is that not a penny of this will go on improving services. The money is to allow the PTEs to pay the extra costs of Railtrack's access charges and the costs of leasing trains from the rolling stock companies — just to continue with the existing service.

If Railtrack and the leading companies are sold off next year, this money could vanish from the railway industry in the form of profits and dividends.

STILL bent on driving more business from the railways, the Government wants Railtrack to pay for even bigger lorries on the roads.

By the time 44-ton lorries are introduced in 1999, Railtrack will have inspected about 7,000 road overbridges at a cost of about £5,000 per inspection. Strengthening bridges so they can bear the weight of the 44-ton monsters will cost an estimated £400 million. The Department of Transport says it will be up to Railtrack and the local authorities to decide which of them pays what for the strengthening. "Railtrack receives funding through access charges paid by BR, so there is money available," said a DoT spokesman.

In other words, infrastructure to make road haulage more competitive will be funded through railway track access charges. If access charges rise to cover the extra cost, rail passengers can expect service cuts or fares increases while freight customers find railfreight becoming even more expensive and road haulage even cheaper. If the rail regulator bars Railtrack from increasing its access charges, other projects, such as modernisation of track and signals, will have to be put on the backburner — to the detriment of rail customers. There are no plans for the DoT to compensate train operators for the expenses incurred and custom lost when a railway is shut for bridge-strengthening works.

What is certain at present is that road hauliers will not pay a sausage towards improving their own business prospects. "We don't intend to isolate road users or penalise them," said the Do. So they'll isolate and penalise rail users instead.

THE FIVE people killed in the Cowden rail crash (see *Eye* **875) paid the price for the Government's rail privatisation programme, which has gobbled up all the money that should have been spent on a vital safety device.**

The Hidden Report on the the horrific Clapham Junction accident in 1988 ordered that Automatic Train Protection — a device that applies the brakes if a train passes a danger signal — "shall be fully implemented within five years". The cost of ATP across Britain was estimated at £759 million, and Cecil Parkinson, then Transport Secretary, said: "Finance will not stand in the way of the implementation of the report".

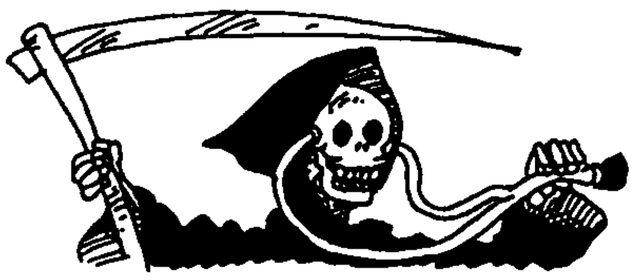
ATP, successfully installed elsewhere in Europe, has quietly been abandoned in Britain on the grounds of expense, but the cost of privatising Britain's railways to date is, er, £880 million. Had that money been spent on ATP the device would have saved the lives of the five people killed in last October's train crash at Cowden, Sussex. Alternatively, the money could have been used on a package of ATP on the busiest lines and upgrades to signalling, which still dates back to Edwardian times in places like Shrewsbury.

THE 87 per cent of the population who now oppose rail privatisation should note the staggering self-enrichment of Archie Norman, chief executive of ASDA.

In a single day this month, Norman sold shares at 97p which he'd been granted "options" to buy at 36p. Instantly that day Norman pocketed £1.2m, and was promptly granted 955,896 new options so he can go through the same process in three years time.

What has this to do with rail privatisation? When John MacGregor, the sleaziest-ever Secretary of State for Transport, was looking around for a suitably greedy entrepreneur to join the board of Railtrack, the instrument of railway privatisation, he picked out Archie Norman, who is still on the Railtrack board.

"Dr B.Ching"



DOING THE ROUNDS

EXPECTANT mothers due to deliver at Birmingham's ill-fated Solihull Hospital have received letters informing them that the 24-hour emergency paediatric service has been withdrawn.

"High risk" pregnancies are to be diverted to Heartlands hospital, but considering some obstetric disasters are unpredictable and occur in the middle of the night, this is less than reassuring. As one of my patients put it: "The reason I decided to have my baby in hospital is because I want to know that the emergency cover is there if something goes wrong." Although she is likely to have a normal delivery, the decision has provoked a lot of anxiety.

Also anxious about the future are Solihull's seven consultant anaesthetists, who aren't happy about having to cover services on two sites when the hospital is taken over by Heartlands trust. Dr Kevin Evans has already left for Coventry and the trust would be well advised to placate the others, considering the national shortage of anaesthetists. Junior doctors, too, are unlikely to find their performance improved by the closure of Solihull's canteen at 3pm on weekends. They have, however, been offered a toasted cheese sandwich to get them through the night.

● A BALLOT of GPs on whether to take sanctions to resolve the out-of-hours conflict now seems likely to go ahead after Health Secretary **Stephen Dorrell** told GP negotiator Dr Ian Bogle that he "needed the summer to consider whether the current offer could be repackaged to meet GPs' concerns." Mr Dorrell may have a greater linguistic grasp than Mrs Bottomley but the message remains the same.

● HEALTH minister **Gerald Malone** has finally accepted that there is a morale and recruitment crisis in general practice. In answer to a question at a conference for academic GPs in **Birmingham** on 19 July, he admitted that there was "a problem" and said his sympathies lay with GPs, but "my hands are tied".

● MESSRS Dorrell and Malone are also doing a good job of pissing off the **nurses**. Forty-one NHS trusts have yet to make any sort of pay offer, and appear to be under very little pressure from the Department of Health to do so.

● THE medical recruitment crisis goes across the board. In yet another survey, of 145 accident and emergency units, 86 said they had an "inappropriate mix" of medical, nursing and support staff, 53 needed more registrars or senior registrars and 43 needed more senior house officers. Seven per cent of consultant posts are also vacant. Ian Stewart, consultant in **Plymouth**'s Deresford hospital has warned that the situation is heading for "chaos" and has suggested a relaxation of the immigration regulations to ease the situation. Now *that* should appeal to the Tory right.

● PRIVATE hospitals have long since used the NHS as a safety net for any cock-ups and not picked up the bill. Now **BUPA** have made it official. From 1 July the company has changed its "Rules and Tables of Benefits" booklet to state that it will only pay for intensive care if it is an accepted part of the normal requirements for the procedure involved. Aside from the fact that you'd need to be brain dead to even consider routine intensive care in a private hospital, this does not bode well for the funding of already oversubscribed NHS intensive care units, where a steady trickle of private patients "unexpectedly" end up.

● THE audit commission's "biggest yet" inquiry into the spending habits of **fundholding GPs** has uncovered a £65 million underspend for 1993-94. Since the scheme started, a mere £165 million has been allocated to management costs.

● WHISTLE-BLOWING remains as safe as ever in the NHS. **Edinburgh Royal Infirmary** NHS trust has suspended Unison steward Tom Waterson for daring to criticise trust policies as detrimental to patient care.

This sensitive act was taken in direct breach of agreed regulations which are supposed to guarantee that disciplinary action against a union officer can only take place after the union has been consulted. It wasn't. The trust has also announced the closure of a geriatric ward, the conversion of the ground floor of the long stay geriatric unit into a private laser treatment unit and the top floor of the maternity unit into private labour suites.

● NOR IS sensitivity a strong point of **Cornwall Healthcare Trust**, which suspended district nursing sister Val McIntosh for highlighting deficiencies in the service and then sacked her while she was off sick with depression.

● THE waiting time for a barium enema at **North Staffordshire** hospital is 16-20 weeks (non-urgent) and two-three weeks (urgent). Unless of course you happen to be a patient of a fundholding GP, in which case you qualify for the "rapid access service"; four weeks for non-urgent and three working days for urgent. The fact that some patients can get an urgent investigation two-and-a-half weeks ahead of others not on the basis not of clinical need but on their GP's ability to pay does not seem to bother the Trust. Indeed, they advertise it openly in their GP bulletin.

● "THERE have been cases where records have been mysteriously mislaid. I regard this as scandalous." So said the **NHS ombudsman** William Reid of trusts and health authorities which deliberately hide sensitive information from patients and relatives. Mr Reid has been suitably scandalised by the paucity of communication skills and complaints procedures in the NHS every year since he came to office, but despite his outpourings the situation appears to be deteriorating.

'MD'

DOWN ON THE FARM

ON ONE of his first speeches as Maffia boss, Douglas "Piggy" Hogg wasted no time in expressing his support for British farming. At the AGM of the Provision Trade Federation, he waxed almost lyrical in his praise for Britain's "animal-friendly" pork and bacon, urging his audience to promote UK foods. The only trouble was, he was addressing an organisation which represents Britain's main food importers.

While demonstrating his lack of experience as agriculture minister, Piggy did, however, confess that he was "not an expert" on farming matters. He will need to wear his L-plates for some time yet. But if "Piggy" is allowed to be pig ignorant, what about his "expert" officials? One hopes they will supply their master with a more accurate brief when he next speaks.

Not, it would seem, that this would improve the Maffia's flagging credibility. So low has its stock fallen that when Maffia "scientists" last week announced that they had failed to find evidence of sheep-hungry big cats roaming Bodmin Moor, their assurances that the "Beast of Bodmin" did not exist were greeted with derision by farmers. Said one: "Farmers round here who trust the ministry are as rare as that beast."

OTHERS not prominent in the Maffia fan club are the ever-diminishing band of egg producers. They are railing against the inactivity of the ministry, confronted by the Co-op retailing organisation which has decided to label its battery eggs as "intensively produced".

Not that many producers are particularly concerned by the principle of this form of labelling — especially as 90 per cent of consumers continue to buy battery eggs, despite the free-range hype. Their point is that such labelling is illegal under EC law so the Maffia — ever keen to prosecute the small fry — should have threatened, if not actually taken, legal action.

But when the big boys put two fingers up the Maffia reaction is somewhat different. It has informed the European Commission, which recently proposed a new law permitting the currently illegal labelling.

To add insult to industry, when a meeting of egg industry representatives to discuss the moves was abandoned by the Maffia because of the rail strike, ministry egg boss George Noble suggested reconvening it on the following Friday, facing delegates with the prospect of struggling home on crowded peak-time trains. Demonstrating how rarely it is that he actually visits the planet earth, Noble's remedy was for the delegates, many of whom pay their own expenses, to travel first class.

And with the Co-op getting away with it, producers are now waiting with bated breath to see the ministry reaction to Marks & Spencers' decision to mark their free-range egg packs with the legend "individually date coded for added freshness". They are waiting to hear what the magic ingredient is which adds freshness to an egg by putting a date stamp on it.

IT IS not only the Maffia which is losing fans fast. Tony Marlow, MP for Northampton North, has been fending off outraged Pembrokeshire citizens who have just learned that his family is raking in large sums of Euro-cash, paid as subsidies for the several Welsh farms operated by the Marlow clan.

Marlow, not well-known for his enthusiasm for the European cause, is also remembered for his maiden speech in the Commons, where he railed against benefit recipients "who are able to work, for whom employment is available, but who are too idle, workshy or troublesome to make any contribution".

But, it seems, Marlow, despite his well-paid day job, is not too proud to allow his own family to take hand-outs funded by the state.

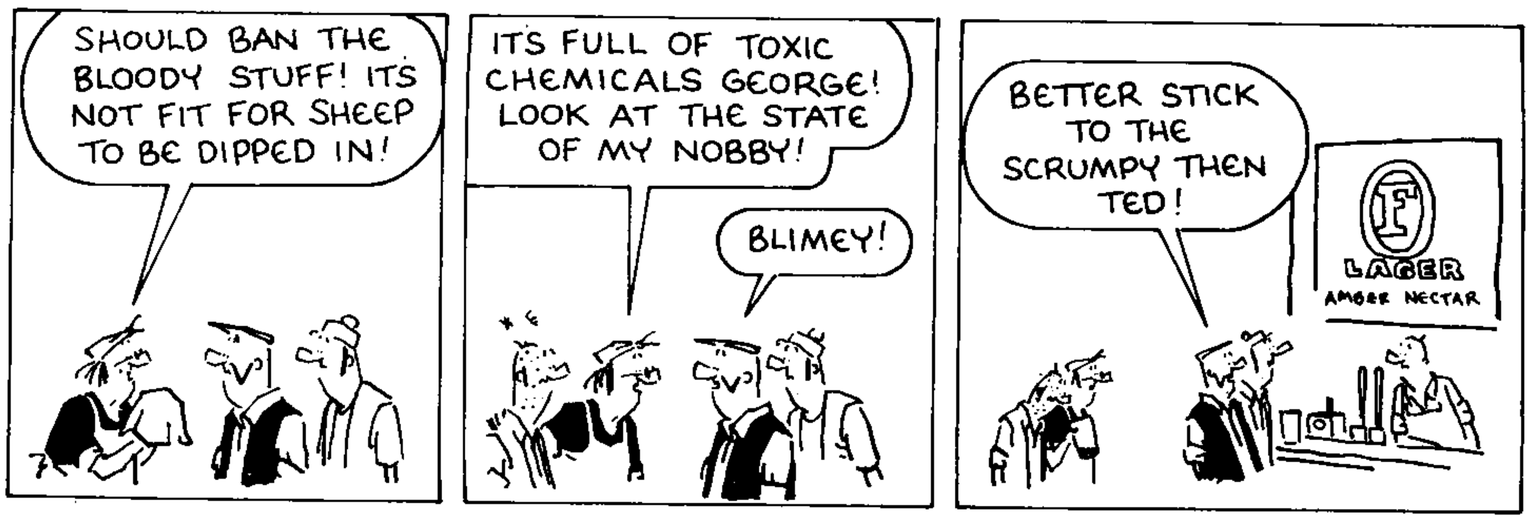
Not that the Marlow clan is the only group on the Euro-gravy train. Premier spongers last year turned out to be the 623 Hampshire arable farmers who averaged cash payments of £40,800 each. Next year they anticipate receiving cheques averaging £52,300 each.

And all this when parents are being asked to dig deep in their own pockets to fund teachers' salaries, to keep class sizes down. Perhaps Marlow should suggest to the EC that the dosh from the crazy CAP Euro-lottery, where everyone's a winner, should be diverted to education.

'New Muckspreader'

Old Macdonald

ALBERT


SHOULD BAN THE BLOODY STUFF! ITS NOT FIT FOR SHEEP TO BE DIPPED IN!
ITS FULL OF TOXIC CHEMICALS GEORGE! LOOK AT THE STATE OF MY NOBBY!
BLIMEY!
BETTER STICK TO THE SCRUMPY THEN TED!
LAGER
AMBER NECTAR

THE Rotten Borough Advertiser

ORGAN-GRINDER

ODD that on the day of Jonathan Aitken's resignation from the Cabinet his special adviser at the Treasury, John Bercow, decided to turn up at Lambeth Town Hall for a meeting of the Central Services Committee.

The main item of business at the meeting was a report by chief executive, Heather Rabbatts, about the council's porn-ring inquiry. Rabbatts issued a bland 15-page report on the latest developments. More significantly, she informed the well-attended meeting that she could not comment on some matters as they were subject to "further investigation".

Bercow, once tipped as a future Chancellor by Norman Tebbit, was himself a Lambeth councillor in the 1980s and a leading figure in the Young Conservatives.

Stranger still is the fact that during Bercow's time in Lambeth, Aitken was bedding prostitute and S&M specialist, Paula Strudwick. Aitken of course had no knowledge of her "double-life", as Strudwick hid all her S&M gear before he came.

In an act of political bed-hopping, Strudwick decided to marry one of "Red Ted" Knight's coterie, Jack Organ. Wisely she decided to keep her maiden name.

In those days Jack Organ portrayed himself as a left-wing loony, enjoying nothing more than visiting miners' picket lines in South Wales and organising with Knight the anti-rate capping campaign.

Doubtless Organ and Strudwick's present landlord, Attorney-General Sir Nicholas Lyell, knew nothing of their "colourful past", unless of course Aitken mentioned anything to him after Cabinet.

ALL HETTIED UP

HACKNEY Women's Centre is swathed in such financial mystery that the Labour council has suspended its grant pending a financial inquiry.

Most of the Centre's £90,000 grant was supposed to cover the salaries of four workers. Yet three of the Centre's four workers have long since been dismissed. One had her case taken up by the Hackney Law Centre, another won an unfair dismissal case and the third is about to start industrial tribunal proceedings.

The remaining worker is described by her union, Unison, as working in an atmosphere of "fear and intimidation". Hardly what you would expect from such a right-on employer. An independent auditor has now been called in to find out exactly why the Centre is so deep in debt.

Councillor Hettie Peters, Chair of the Centre, will obviously be in the auditor's spotlight when he investigates the financial problems. Meanwhile, the council's sensible leaders have noted her outstanding success at the Centre and have awarded her the post of Chair of the Social Services Committee. The post come with a generous allowance and Peters will be in charge of an even larger budget than that of the struggling Women's Centre.

YOU'VE BEEN AD

MANCHESTER Council has launched a £1 million-plus advertising campaign of eye-catching posters which will be splashed all over London Tube stations, aimed at selling the city as the all-night, all-day life and soul of Britain.

Despite featuring that well-known Mancunian opera singer, Pavarotti, the ads are somewhat wide of the mark. In the groovy 24-hour city ratings, Manchester has more in common with Middlesbrough than Madrid. The centre grinds to a halt when office workers go home at 5pm; the one-line tram system shuts an hour earlier than the London Underground and the buses pack up before 11pm. The only 24-hour services are the prostitutes that line the streets round Piccadilly station and a minicab outlet in Moss Side which also sells goat curry.

Meanwhile, Manchester's new £60 million "showpiece" sports and entertainment arena, Nynex, the largest in Europe, has opened amid the sort of farce that people have come to expect from Britain's non-Olympic city.

The seating tiers at the top of the auditorium are so steep that during the opening night, a Torvill and Dean show, scores of fans left at half-time overcome with vertigo — not that there were enough handrails to make their descent easier.

Angry punters, mindful of Ibrox and Hillsborough, now claim the arena is a disaster waiting to happen. For those who stayed to the end there were two further hours of horror as drivers queued to leave the car park.

The firm in charge of the arena, Ogdens, have thoughtfully designed the car park with one exit — as one would for a supermarket — no one having told them that concert fans tend to go home all at the same time.

DUFFY INFORMATION

BENT Tory leader Bob Blackman can forget about winning a safe Parliamentary seat thanks to his carelessness with sensitive political files. Blackman recently acquired a new computer for his town hall office and his old machine was re-allocated to the Labour group. As has been reported, Blackperson somehow forgot to erase certain files before relinquishing the machine and copies of his letters thanking the Government for "rigging" the local government grant system to help the Tories keep control of Bent have been exchanging hands in Westminster.

It now appears that there was another highly sensitive file which Blackman forgot to delete. This one contained details of how a Tory sympathiser had visited Labour councillor John Duffy at home and, posing as an ordinary member of the public, secretly recorded a conversation about Bent's Irish Centre, recently the subject of a fraud inquiry by Inspector Knacker.

Tory supporters and councillors have since threatened Duffy with the tape and transcript to try and intimidate him into dropping his campaign against the way the Centre has been run. Duffy says he is standing firm.

IN BRIEF

THE former chief executive of Congleton, Cheshire, Christine Pointer, has accused ex-colleagues of financial misdemeanours. A "moving payment" was made to a council tenant who happened to be the mother of a former councillor. A council house was re-roofed at council expense *after* it had been sold and another entirely private house was re-roofed by the council. One official is on gardening leave while another has been given early retirement with 10 year's enhancement to his pension. Pointer's letter is now in the hands of Inspector Knacker.

COUNCILLORS in Tameside, east Manchester, have doubled their allowances since the Government removed limits on councillors' payments. The new rates are based on the average white collar wage of £86 per day. Presumably the rises are the reward for members' selfless work looking after the council's private wing, Tameside Enterprises Ltd, which has lost £20 million of public money on ill-conceived schemes (*Eyes passim*). Labour councillors in Doncaster have done even better, voting themselves a 110 per cent pay rise.

NEWLY-elected Bournemouth Tory councillor Robert Lelliot has been placed on the Development Services Committee. He will be on familiar ground, as he was, until early retirement, the Borough Engineer — and Development Services is the new name for the Borough Engineers Department. A senior manager in Development Services is one Stephen Lelliot, son of Robert. He was appointed under Daddy's leadership — and has enjoyed accelerated promotion in the department.

RED FACE OF THE WEEK

ELSIE CAPLE had lived in her house in Liverpool's Kensington district for 52 years. When her husband died she found her name was not on the tenancy agreement. She asked the owners, Sandown Properties, for her name to replace her dead husband's. At first they refused, then offered her a three-year contract at double the rent. When councillors heard of this they all registered disgust at the pensioner's shoddy treatment. But one face in the chamber was rather red, that of Liberal Democrat Beatrice Frankel, whose declared interests include Sandown Properties, run jointly by her and her husband Michael.

LUVVIES

"I act from my crotch. That's where my force is. Sexuality is my strongest driving force and as I get older and older, I find it is less and less, shall we say, compelling."

JEREMY IRONS
Today (South Africa)

"I'm the Hiroshima of love."

SYLVESTER STALLONE
Daily Star

Submitted by Billy Wheeler, Frances Templeton.

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.

NOOKS and CORNERS

WE ARE betrayed. In *Eye* 868 I described the threat to the Thames Tunnel, that remarkable and historic piece of engineering by Sir Marc Brunel which now forms part of the East London Line of London Underground. Within minutes of the article appearing, I am delighted to report, Mr Stephen Dorrell, then Secretary of State for National Heritage, took my advice and listed the tunnel. But any advantage thus secured in stopping London Underground from "shotcreting" the brickwork of Brunel's Great Bore is now being undermined by the craven and mendacious behaviour of English Heritage.

On 26 May, Paul "The Gerbil" Drury, Chairman Jocelyn Stevens' director of London Region, wrote to the London Docklands Development Corporation that English Heritage's panel of experts "have concluded that the defects and risks posed by the tunnel warrant major intervention, and that for the section of the tunnel under the Thames, there is no practical alternative to the scheme proposed by London Underground Ltd". But this, as they say, is being rather economical with the *actualité*.

In fact, English Heritage's "peer group" of eminent engineers consider that the proposal by London Underground to spray concrete all over the tunnel is a waste of £7.5 million of taxpayers' money and that, although their investigations were not complete when Drury sent his unctious letter, their damning report states that "We have seen no prepared statement of justification for the proposed works...In our opinion the tunnel is in remarkably good condition for its age of 152-169 years and with considerable years of strength, even against accidental damage. With normal periodic maintenance, we believe that, under present usage, it can be expected to have a further life of comparable length."

These engineers — Denis Smith, James Sutherland and Sir Alan Muir Wood — were thwarted in their investigations partly owing to a predictable lack of co-operation by London Underground. Furthermore, as the *New Civil Engineer* has reported, its own engineers contemptuously declined an offer from British Rail to use a high-tech tunnel inspection vehicle which can detect defects and leaks without destroying the tunnel lining. LU's engineers know better, of course: they have already removed more than 240 square metres of Brunel's original brickwork as part of an "inspection".

Just why LU and the LDDC wish to waste so much public money in destructive and pointless work is not clear. What is clear is that, as the Thames Tunnel has been listed because of its (immense) historical importance, then its fate should be decided at a public inquiry. A decision from John Gummer, Environment Secretary, is eagerly awaited. As for the wretched Drury, he insists that he was not responding to any political pressure when he cut short English Heritage's own experts' investigations and sold the pass. Well he would, wouldn't he?

A RUM ceremony took place at St Stephen's Walbrook — the famous Wren City Church with the ripe camembert circular altar — on 4 July. This was the "Dedication of the Foundation Stone of Number 1 Poultry in the presence of the Right Honourable The Lord Mayor, Sir Christopher Walford MA DCL." Somehow, My Lord Palumbo forgot to invite me to this historic event, but from the programme I learn that, after Lady Stirling —

Big Jim's widow — dedicated the foundation stone of her late (and lamented) husband's posthumous Wireless Set to the sound of plainsong and Zadok The Priest, "Black Voices" — an a cappella group from Birmingham — sang Loves In Need by Stevie Wonder and Get Up Stand Up by Bob Marley.

No, I am not making this up. But what is really rum about all this is that it took place in poor Wren's much abused church (Eyes passim) and not on the actual site of Stirling's dated building. Normally, when royalty or whoever lay foundation stones for town halls, hospitals or whatever, they do so amidst the foundations of the great work and quite without fanfares and wailing. So why not in this case? It is not just that My Lord Palumbo, greatest patron of the arts since records began, loves stage-managing ceremonies of this sort. It is that foundation stone laying wastes time.

No.1 Poultry is, of course, only now going ahead because Palumbo has been bought out by Herr Dieter Bock. And, since his arrival, German project engineers have taken over the job and have reorganised everything so that the building can go up as quickly as possible and make as much money as possible. Laying the foundation stone on site might have prevented half a day's work. So will Herr Bock allow My Lord Palumbo to organise a grand opening ceremony — no doubt with a performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony as well as music by Little Richard and Jimi Hendrix in the presence of the Princess of Wales — to celebrate his final victory over the City Corporation, English Heritage, the Victorian Society and most civilised opinion? Not if it wastes time and money he won't.

'Piloti'

Incidentally, as an example of the film's sloppy approach to period detail, the pubic hair in the hooker scene is far too severely cropped — fine for a *Baywatch* bikini line but not for a Twenties whorehouse.

MARK STEYN
The Spectator

Q: To press you further, you seem to be absolutely certain of your theory, even though there is no circumstantial corroboration — Shakespeare left no notes to Emilea Bassano — and you dismiss everyone else who does not share that certainty. Isn't this rather a rigid approach?

A: No, it's completely consistent with my view that when it comes to thinking people simply can't do it. And by the way, I have a bit of news for you — people are really coming round to my view. When I was interviewed by Ned Sherrin, he understood the whole shoot, and was in agreement with it. Why? Because he's a very clever man with a first-rate brain.

A.L. ROWSE
The Oldie

Pseuds Corner

This conference will investigate the study of post-colonial literatures in a comparative and cross-cultural framework, focusing on the problematic nature of linguistic, national and interdisciplinary divisions and challenging the academic parameters that continue to separate these literatures, often in relation to colonial boundaries. Recent work on the theorizing of the border has emphasised the decentering of unitary concepts of national identity and suggested the multi-contextuality of border culture as a more dynamic paradigm for exploring post-colonial hybridity as it exists both within and across nations.

University of North London conference on "Border Crossings, comparative and interdisciplinary approaches to post-colonial literatures"

Stacey wears fur gillet and leather underpants by Vivienne Westwood, 6 Davies St, London W1 and 40 Conduit St, London W1; American Indian and Indian jewellery from Le Souk, 8 Rue de la Corderie, Paris or to order on 00 331 48 87 55 99. Bodyguards wear black leather motorcycle pants by Daffy Moto; samurai sword by Edouard Kettner.

The Face

I know a bit about him [Michael Jackson]. On the other hand, I feel I know nothing because there's a Teflon quality about him. Also, he's like some Ruritanian admiral who's strayed into this post-modernist world I suppose that this represents. As Tony says, it is paranoid and there is a jagged, rancid but curiously anodyne quality about the paranoia. I kept thinking that this is music, this is a performance made out of soya beans. I mean, this feeling that it's a non-stick frying pan you're listening to.

TOM PAULIN
Late Review

Q: You have often said that you know you are a better poet than most poets published today. What do you think has prevented this from being more generally recognised?

A: You've got a very searching point there. It's partly due to the specialisation of today. People think of me as just a historian and nothing else, whereas the truth is that I was writing and even publishing poetry years before I ever dared write a work of historical research. Also I always regarded my poetry as fundamentally private and I think that's one of the reasons why it isn't fully appreciated. Of course people never understand anything complicated and I rather think that my work is so complicated that it will only receive true recognition in the next century.

A.L. ROWSE
The Oldie

Contributors: Gnome, E. Strobes, L. Löb, G. Hodge, A.R.

£10 paid for entries

Letters

Bus stop

Sir,

I am not much of a one for "writing letters", nor do I consider myself easily shocked or offended (if I were, I wouldn't read the EYE*).*

However, the cartoon on page 5 of this week's EYE*, making reference to recent coach disasters is, I feel, neither funny nor in good taste, and shows a lack of respect for the feelings of the victims' families and friends.*

Stick to digging dirt, not printing sickening trash.

Yours,
MATTHEW LEVIN,
Headington, Oxford

P.S. Need I mention my subscription?

Drug abused

Sir,

*In reply to Mr Harkness' letter (*EYE *876), I am glad that he agrees that the "Prescribing Incentive Scheme" is quite ludicrous. However, he should have done a bit of homework.*

PACT prescribing data for doctors are adjusted for the age of the population, as obviously the elderly need more prescriptions. They are also related to the drug bills of the surrounding area as well as the national average. In my case they were similar.

The British medical school training is still regarded as one of the best in the world. Apart from surgical emergencies, the management and treatment of medical problems varies greatly even in other European countries.

Not only is your correspondent unpatriotic, he is also a male chauvinist, as he assumed my letter was written by a man.

Yours faithfully,
DR ROSEMARY ALEXANDER,
Pinner, Middlesex

Lookalike

Prehistoric man

Rolling Stone

Sir,

Perhaps other readers have noticed the similarity between Mick Jagger and Boxgrove Man. Is Mick Jagger 360,000 years old? I think we should be told.

Yours faithfully,
KEITH SPENCE,
Tunbridge Wells, Kent

Honest John

Sir,

*I must protest at your assertion that John Smith refused to conduct an inquiry into the activities of Monklands Council (*EYE *875). John Smith repeatedly asked the Secretary of State for Scotland to carry out an inquiry, who refused.*

Yours faithfully,
GERALD HEARNS
Irvine, Ayrshire

So far so good

Sir,

Bookworm is a valued antidote to the usual literary log-rolling and score-settling circuit, but, as Oscar Wilde said about Frank Harris, sometimes you don't know how too far to go. Slagging off everything is just as bad as praising everything and Richard Ford's INDEPENDENCE DAY *is a very fine book which doesn't deserve to be singled out for a gnawing. Maybe your reviewer should give it another try when he reaches middle age in, what, about 30 years time?*

Yours,
STEVE GRANT,
London W9.

Rat's tail

Sir,

As a Liverpool-born rat I have for years stolen, shredded, eaten and nested in your ageing publication. Imagine my dismay when I read in EYE *875 that you have the nerve to compare me with a Liverpool solicitor! Granted, we rodents grow fat on the detritus of society and when times are lean we have a penchant for tearing each other to ribbons, but there the similarities end. We are only despised by 99 per cent of the population. An apology is due!*

A. RAT,
Liverpool City Centre.

Talking rot

Sir,

*In your rotten article (*EYE 876*) on Richmond's main depot at Craneford Way in Twickenham, you were clearly anxious not to let the facts get in the way of a story:*

The facts are:

1. Craneford Way has been the Council's main depot for most of the century.

2. Recycling materials (why do you call them rubbish?) are not deposited all day and night. Indeed no vehicles leave the depot at night except in emergencies.

3. The speed humps were brought in with the agreement of the majority of local residents.

4. It is not Richmond Council which has prevented a road being built between the dual-carriageway and Craneford Way depot. It's the Department of Transport which has opposed any further roads entering the dual carriageway but, thanks to the Council's continued efforts, it has now agreed to discuss the possibility further.

5. Nobody turned violent, nobody wore heavy disguises. In fact, no story!

Yours faithfully,
COUNCILLOR MARTIN ELENGORN,
Chairman, Planning & Transport, Richmond Borough Council.

How come?

Sir,

*I read your Hackwatch column (*EYE *876) with great interest. It states that "former Malawi president Kenneth Kaunda 'is being hailed as Africa's comeback kid'". It would be less of a comeback and more of an historic "first" were Dr Kaunda to be elected in Malawi, as he was the President of Zambia for over 25 years.*

Yours,
CLARK DUNN,
London E1.

Race relations

Sir,

I am glad to be able to end the speculation about the photograph of the elderly gentleman and the young Asian lady. During the apartheid era in South Africa, sex between persons of different races was deemed to be criminal offence in terms of the so-called Immorality Act. A much celebrated repeat transgressor of this act was Brillus van Derkerrybonker who is the elderly gentleman in the photo. The young lady is his legendary Indian consort Pokahonky. The photo was taken by the old South African Vice Squad and was used as evidence in one of Brillus's many court cases. The cap is a feeble attempt by Brillus to hide his distinctive "steel wool" hair which was often regarded by his racist detractors as a sign that Brillus might himself have been of mixed parentage.

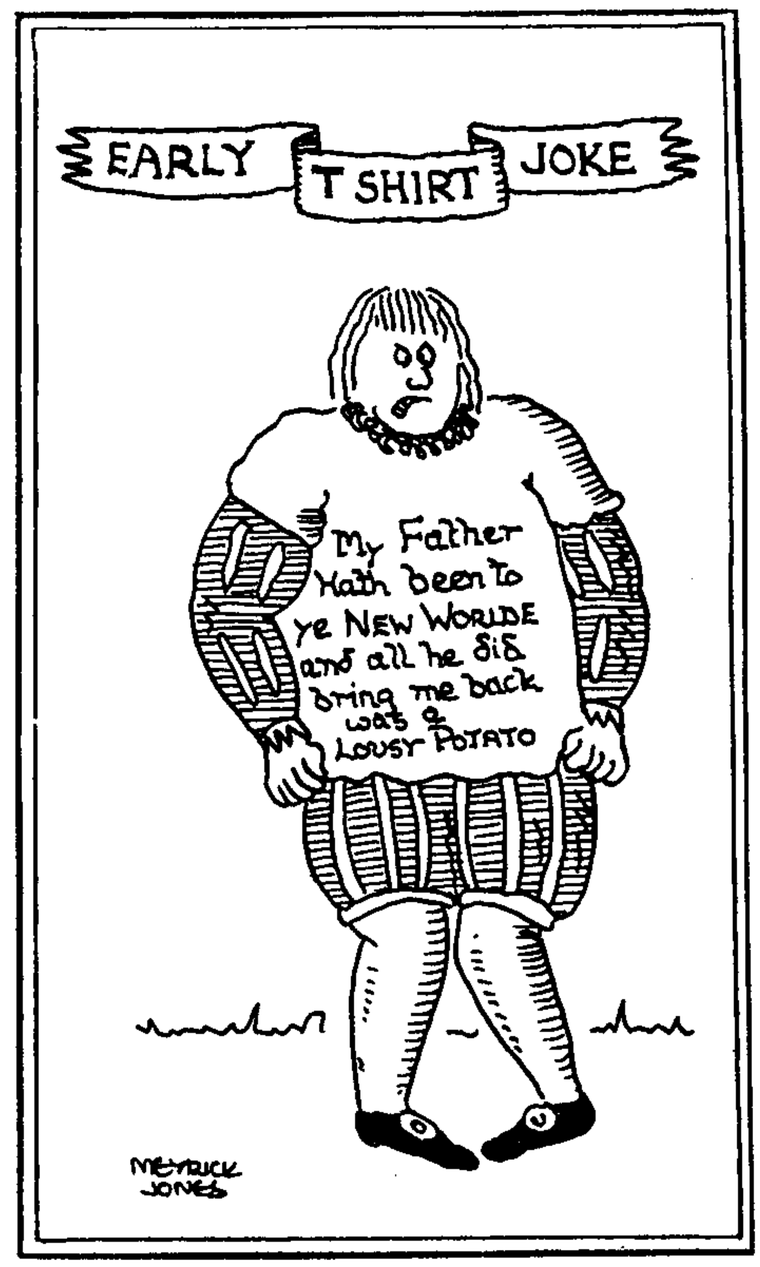
Yours faithfully,
GREGORY OVENDEN,
Johannesburg, South Africa.

Pro life

Sir,

Pillory the pompous, expose the corrupt, riducule the absurd but never regard the outcome of the murder of innocent, defenceless, unborn children as a source of humour (Funny Old World, EYE *874).*

Yours faithfully,
A.M. HARRINGTON,
Southampton, Hants.



One off

Sir,

I was outraged to read the so-called "Disc Jockey" Nicky Campbell's comparison between Count Camillo Cavour and the so-called "Matthew Bannister". Cavour was simply a successful and cynical political animal who proceeded by opportunism, stealth and disinformation and merely took advantage of the heroic efforts of the champions of the people while ensuring their eventual failure. He had nothing whatsoever to do with Radio One and the suggestion that he would is abominable.

Ciao,
DANIEL MILNES,
Leeds.

Internet profits

Sir,

In issue 875 there was an item about Bill Gates and his love of capitalism. This aberration is not unique, even among those who have less money. However the remainder of the piece, dealing with the "Internet Service" is wrong.

1. Microsoft Network will be a proprietory information service like Compuserve, America On Line, or Prodigy and may or may not have an Internet gateway.

2. The so-called background sniffer itemizes and software as the part of the Windows 95 operating system which allows certain features to be implemented. [What **does** *this mean? — Ed.] The registration part of Windows 95 does take an inventory of the hardware on the system and asks whether the registrant wants this info sent. If the answer is no, it doesn't get sent.*

I know this because having heard and read the same rumours I hooked up two computers so that I could monitor the "conversation" between my machine and Microsoft. No additional data was sent. If I said send it, only the material that was presented as going to be sent was in fact sent. If requested no send it no sent.

Thank you,
FRANK LEONARDO,
Information Week.

Sinking fund

Sir,

Your article on Brent Spar (Worm's Eye View) in EYE *875 impugns the independence of the Institute of Oceanographic Studies by citing payments made by Shell and UKOOA to the National Environmental Research Council. We have in fact been quite unable to trace the UKOOA payment of £21,000 which you mention — but it is quite clear it did not go to the Institute and all payments to NERC we have made have been for totally unrelated pieces of work done in other research establishments.*

Perhaps you need to get up to date with the methods by which industry (largely at government behest and fully in line with Rothschild approaches) helps fund research in this country. In fact industry is a massive financial supporter of such work. It would be a ridiculous situation if, every time, a dispute like this breaks out, scientists and organisations so funded are made out to be lacking independence simply because of the overall mechanism of such support, which will almost always be for work of not the remotest relevance to the current issue, whatever it is.

For an organ which prides itself at getting the facts rather than the smokescreens of current issues, you would have done better to examine the shaky or non-existent "science" of Greenpeace's assertions about Brent Spar which, latterly, they seem to be coming close to admitting was flawed. We and many good scientists told everyone that, at the time. But there's none so deaf as doesn't want to hear.

Yours faithfully,
DR. HAROLD W.D. HUGHES
O.B.E,
Director-General, UKOOA.

I-SPY

Barbados

Santorini

Submitted by Eric Drew and A.P. Jackson. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*

Chopping around

Sir,

Urquhart calls the Westland Apache "old, a bit cranky but cheap". The airframe is indeed old, but the current incarnation is the most hi-tech combat helicopter currently available. It is certainly not "cranky" — the Apache is the Army's first choice, because it is battle-proven, reliable and extremely capable. Neither is it cheap, in fact, it is the most expensive option that the Ministry of Defence considered.

Urquhart says that the choice is between the Apache and a "hi-tech, state-of-the-art number made by a Euro-consortium". This is hardly true — the Euro Tiger has only just flown, it is certainly not in production and will not be available to the Army until the end of the millenium, unlike the Apache. Urquhart failed to mention the third viable option — the Bell Cobra, with new avionics and cockpit, produced by GEC.

For once, political considerations — such as toadying up to our European colleagues, by subsidizing their defence industries — have been overcome by defence requirements. This can only be good news for our armed forces.

Yours etc,
JOHN D. FISHLEY,
Selby, N. Yorkshire

Expletive delighted

Sir,

While I accept that all people in public life are fair game for the EYE, *I really must take exception to your "Libel News" article in 14 July issue about my friend Alastair "Blubber" Brett. Whatever Al thought of David Price, I can assure you he would never call anyone a "fucking cunt" — he's too much of a gentleman. I can only assume it is your reporter who is the fucking cunt for writing such trash. One would think he had more sense, being the editor of the "Libel News" column.*

Yours faithfully,
WENDY ALEXANDER,
London SW14.

A fair cop

Sir,

Following the Police Commissioner's comments — is it true that many of those found innocent of incidents involving violence against young coloured unemployed males in the capital are blue-eyed boys dressed in blue called Bobby?

Yours sincerely,
COLIN KIRKHAM,
Coventry, West Midlands.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

Fortunately it was a slow ball — so it wasn't a fast one."
GEOFF BOYCOTT, BBC
(Norman Stinchcombe)

"And this game [is] coming nicely to a climax... like a well-cooked Welsh rabbit."
COMMENTATOR, Radio 4
(Miranda Chaplin)

John: *What is that gadget she has for holding her ball, Christine?*
Christine: *It's called a ball-holder, John.*
COMMENTATORS, Radio 5 Live
(J.L. Thomas)

"John Redwood **is** *a young man but, let's face it, so was Margaret Thatcher in 1975."*
EDWARD LEIGH MP, Radio 5 Live
(S. Lack)

"As Boris Becker sits there, his eyes staring out in front of him, I wonder what he's thinking? I think he's thinking 'I am Boris Becker'. At least, I hope that's what he's thinking."
JOHN BARRETT, BBC2
(David Redhill)

HOM SAP

BY DAVID AUSTIN

FUNNY OLD WORLD

● "It's tragic really," spokesman Chong Ser Yeow informed reporters gathered outside Taipei police headquarters. "Huang has devoted his entire life to literature, but he seems to have no understanding at all of the written word."

Chong was speaking following the arrest of novelist Huang Chia-Yuan, 38, on charges of vandalism. "Huang is a failed author who became so depressed when all his works were rejected by publishers that he decided to commit suicide. So he bought a copy of the *Complete Suicide Manual*, a Japanese book that's selling well here in Chinese translation, and tried to follow the instructions. First he committed hara kiri, but he used a potato peeler and the blade broke against his ribs. Then he read the section on electrocution and stuck his wet fingers into a light socket, but didn't notice the paragraph about not wearing shoes with rubber soles. He even tried taking an overdose, but only swallowed a bottleful of indigestion tablets. Finally, he threw the book away in disgust, and decided to smash up luxury cars with a hammer, hoping that the owners would kill him. He'd wrecked six parked cars by the time we arrested him. Huang had nearly achieved his death wish, too, because the owner of a smashed-up Lexus was dangling him upside down by his ankles when we got there, with his head over a street vendor's deep frying wok." *(Bangkat Post, 16/6/95. Spotter — Illegible)*

—●—

● **"By your actions, you have brought ridicule and contempt on yourself," Judge Giles Rooke told Anthony Akhurst in a hushed Crown Court at Canterbury. "It is very rare indeed to find this offence being committed with the defendant putting himself on the receiving end."**

Earlier, prosecuting counsel Mr Oliver Saxby had described the events that led to the arrest of Akhurst, 45, on a charge of attempted buggery with his family's pet alsatian. "On the evening of the offence, when the defendant returned home from the pub, his two sons were in bed, and his wife was at work. At about 11.30pm, the elder son heard the family dog, Bruno, yelping excitedly, so he went downstairs. There he saw his father, naked on his hands and knees, and the dog standing behind him on its hind legs, thrusting vigorously, its front paws on top of his father's back. Realising he had been observed, the defendant claimed it was all part of Bruno's training, and advised his son to say nothing to his mother. But next day his son told a teacher and, when police began making enquiries, Akhurst eventually confessed the truth."

Akhurst, who admitted similar previous offences, was bound over for 18 months. His barrister, Mr David Burles, told the court in mitigation that, since his arrest, Akhurst had lost his job, been beaten up in his local pub and, worst of all, now lives alone in Margate. *(Thanet Times, June 1995. Spotter — Carl Rees)*

—●—

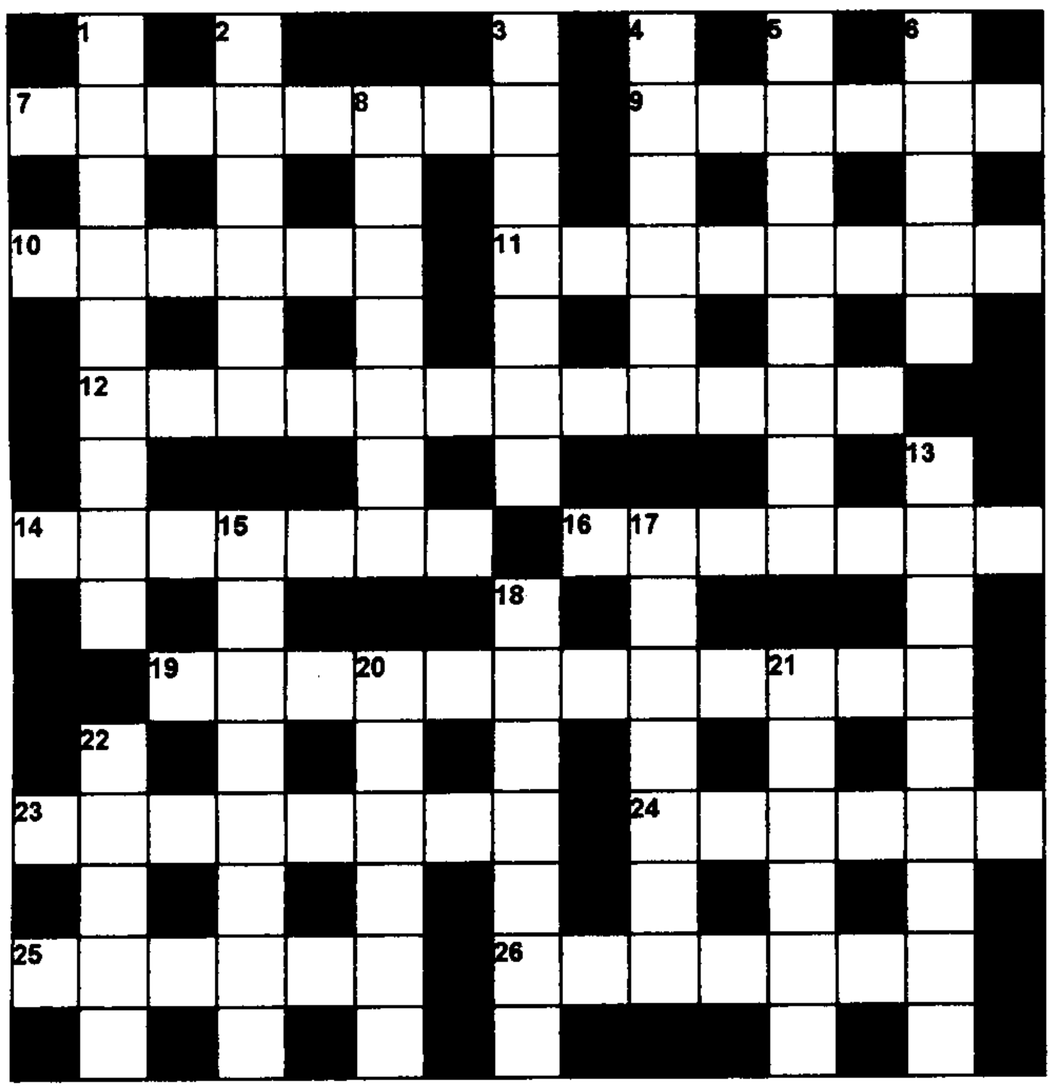
"I am shocked to have to tell you that government officials and school inspectors are very fond of having casual sex with the schoolchildren they are supposed to be supervising," President Phineas Magagula of the Swaziland National Association of Teachers told the Minister of Education Senator Arthur Khoza during a conference at Salesian High School, Manzini. "It seems that their job is to propose love to the students when they visit the schools, instead of carrying out their required duties. I therefore demand that all officials are issued with free condoms and given this message: 'When seducing children: No love bites. Two inputs only (tradesman's entrance is out of bounds). Please wear a condom.' This will prevent the spread of venereal disease and quell indiscipline in schools. Thank you for your time, Minister, and God bless you."

President Magagula has since been relieved of his duties. (The Times of Swaziland, 30/6/95. Spotter — Sean Cronin)

Compiled by
Victor Lewis-Smith

EYE CROSSWORD 33 by Cyclops

£100 Winner TONY WILSON



ACROSS

7 'Trouble in socks', that's the sheriff's men (8)
9 Prat, nerd, extremely lacking, crap retailer (6)
10 Hint: Brenda gives head! (6)
11 'Philandering, Ecstasy-gobbling Di no nun' slur (8)
12 Fat cat managers parodied by our cartoon film-makers (3,9)
14 (see 26)
16 To upset celebrity arse-licking mag would be a tragedy (7)
19 Unofficially, many MPs would doubtless prefer their financial interests to remain so (3,3,6)
23 Fish a bit? Here's a tackle box (8)
24 Greatly amused Norman Fowler initially having sex is put outside (2,4)
25 Randy queen vacates a throne all worked up (2,4)
26/14 As a means of physical development, it has its knockers (7,7)

DOWN

1 Hospital cut that will result in a sterile future (9)
2 Politician's first step is to make a promise (6)
3 Court prat embraces what's not supposed to matter (7)
4 Willy has scorch mark on its end (6)
5 Abrupt way Michael, the star, got rid of the old dragon (2,6)
6 It's shit abroad according to Gummer, no mouthpiece of French (5)
8/21 Outlandish appointment for Hanley? (7,6)
13 The PM's old bag (9)
15 Lord, it's a long-term con getting a piss inside (4,4)
17 It'll be hard getting screwed three times a week on the box (3,4)
18 English on right lines for defeat (7)
20 Maastricht? Go stuff yourself inside! (6)
21 (see 8)
22 Unite under Tory leader? Other way round — segment! (5)

£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 4.08.95. Entries to "Crossword", Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG.

Solution to Crossword No. 32

ACROSS: 8/28 Baroness Thatcher 9 Odious 10 Chi-Chi 11 Redwood 12 Dear John 13 Wealth 14 Salary 17 Andrew 20 Maggie 22 Old farts 25 Bulimia 26 Cheers 27 Arming 28 (See 8).

DOWN: 1 Cashless 2 Soccer 3 De Niro 4 G-string 5 Lord Owen 6 Dinosaur 7 Pundit 15 Legal aid 16 Rees-Mogg 18 Water bed 19 Royalty 21 Albert 23 Dachau 24 Agency.

The Secret Diary of John Major aged 47¾

Monday

When I went to my office this morning I noticed that the wall where my *Daily Telegraph* World Map used to be has been turned into a very large door with two lights above it. One is red, saying "Wait" and the other is green, saying "Enter". I was just going to sit down when the green light went on, and the doors slid open. Imagine my not inconsiderable surprise when I saw on the other side a huge room the size of a football pitch, and at the far end an enormous desk with my friend Mr Heseltine sitting behind it. "Do come in, John," he shouted, "I'll be with you in a minute. I've just got a few important calls to make."

While I sat there I read the notice on his desk which said "Rt. Hon. M. Heseltine, Deputy Prime Minister, First Lord of the Jungle, Chairman of all Cabinet Committees, Primus Inter Pares and De-Facto Supreme Ruler of the Universe". I was just going to ask him what "Primus Inter Pares" meant, when Mr Heseltine finished his telephone call to Mr Herr Kohl and said: "Ah, John, I've got some good news for you. All this election business must have been pretty tiring for you. You deserve a good long break, so I've decided to send you on holiday." I thought how lucky I am to have a deputy who is so considerate and thoughtful.

We were interrupted by a gang of workmen carrying a very big statue of Lord Nelson. "It looks just like the one in Trafalgar Square," I said. "It is the very same," said Mr Heseltine. "It has been lent to me by a grateful nation. Now if you'll excuse me, I have to ring Mr Yeltsin to see if he's dead yet."

Tuesday

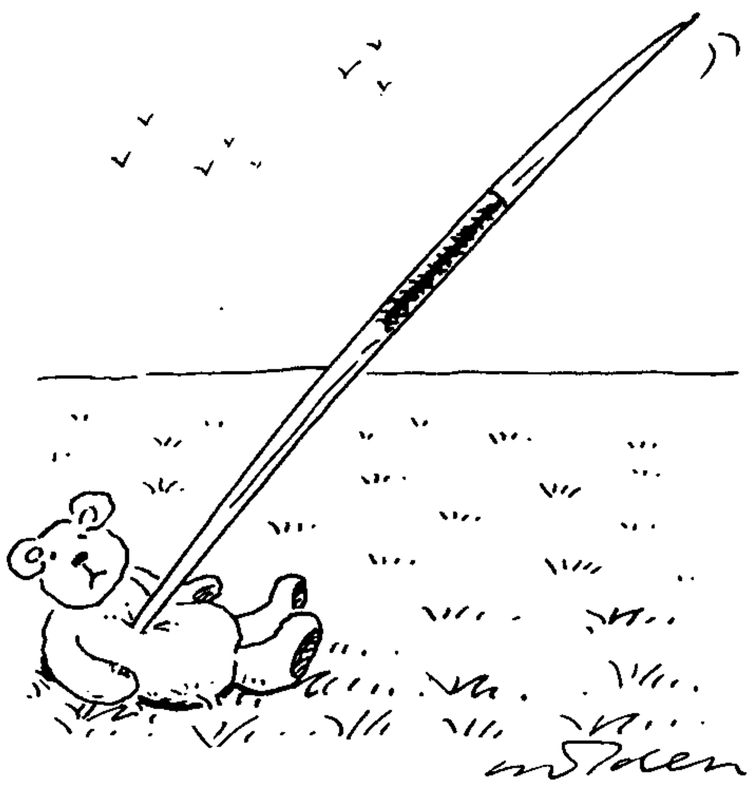
I was just puzzling over the main headline in the Telegraph, "HEZZA RINGS YEZZA", when the new Party Chairman Mr Mawhinney came through my office. "Don't touch those papers, John," he shouted in his funny Irish voice. "I've put them out for Mr Heseltine. He wants to look at them before the Cabinet meeting he's called." "Oh," I said. "is there a Cabinet meeting?" "Not for you, John," he said. "You're officially on holiday." He then put a card into the sliding doors, and they opened. I was about to follow him when the doors shut again, and the red light went on saying "Wait". There is something very odd going on there, which I do not completely understand.

Wednesday

Today I have launched a great initiative which will win us the next election. It is perhaps my best idea to date, apart from my other great election-winning initiatives, which have been:

1. The Citizen's Charter
2. The Cones Hotline
3. Challenging myself for Leader of the Conservative Party and winning.

That is a record which any prime

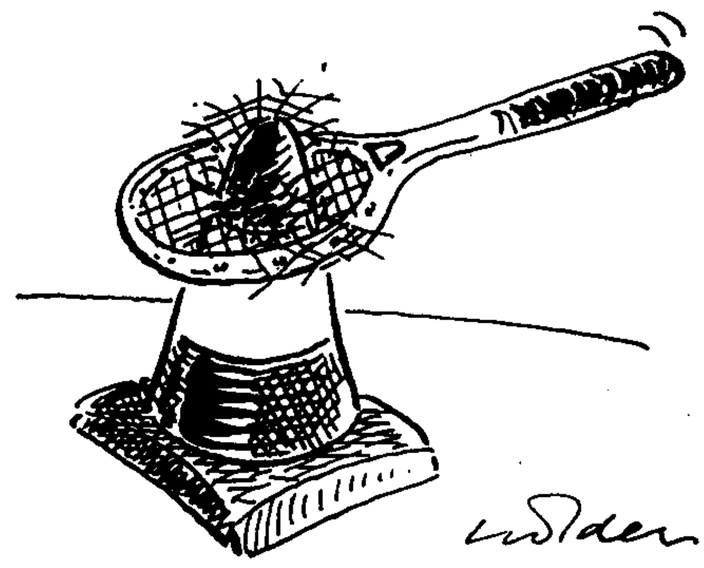


minister could be proud of. Oh yes.

My new idea is to have compulsory sport in all schools, to help us win back the Ashes and win Wimbledon.

I announced this at a very important press conference with lots of famous sporting personalities such as Sir Stanley Matthews, Rachel Heyhoe-Flint and my friend Jeffrey Archer, the Olympic sprinter. I explained my idea, which was to spend millions of pounds from the National Lottery on Olympic-sized cricket pitches and tennis courts in all inner-city playgrounds, so that every British child will have the chance to win a gold medal for Britain. One very rude journalist asked: "How can the children do sport when Mrs Shepherd has sent them all off to get work experience in the factories?" "Don't be silly!" I said, quick as a flash. "There aren't any factories any more."

Everyone laughed at this clever reply and I was then photographed hitting a rugby ball at some cricket stumps with a tennis racquet. Oh yes, it was a great success.



Thursday

I had a not inconsiderably unpleasant nightmare last night, from which I woke up screaming. Norma had to got to the bathroom to get me a glass of Eno's Fruit Salts to calm me down. I told her I had dreamed that I was sitting in my office in the jungle when Mr Heseltine in a leopard-skin swooped down on a creeper shouting: "Me Tarzan, you John. Get me a banana at oncer!"

Fortunately when I got up in the morning I found that everything was back to normal. Mr Heseltine was in a meeting with the rest of the Cabinet and the red light was on.

As I sat there re-arranging my biros, including my special "campaign pen" with the snappy slogan "Vote For Me And Not Mr Redwood", Mr Hurd rang. "Hullo, prime minister," he said. "I'm glad to see you're sticking to my Bosnia policy." "What's that?" I said. "I thought we didn't have a Bosnia policy?"

Mr Hurd laughed politely in his funny Old Etonian way. "Exactly, prime minister. I've just heard on the news that Mr Rifkind has called a special summit conference so that we can ask the Americans and all the others what to do."

This is a very good idea by Mr Rifkind and shows that Mr Hurd will not be missed.

"You see," I told Mr Hurd. "No one is indispensable." "How very true," said Mr Hurd and rang off. Mr Waldegrave then came in carrying a very big tray with a silver teapot and one huge mug marked "The Boss".

"That is very kind of you," I was just about to say, when the green light went on and Mr Waldegrave disappeared through the doors.

SUNDAY TIMES

The Night I Knew It Would All Go Wrong

by Britain's Top Dramatist
SIMON GRAYMAN

Extracts from his forthcoming book The Whingeing Playwright.

CHAPTER 94

I AM horribly let down at a preview at the Swindon Hexagon. Half-way through Act II of my brilliant new play, *Cell Out* (based on the historic meeting in prison of Nelson Mandela and Gerry Adams), the scenery collapsed and the bars of the prison windows suddenly fell on to the stage!

Adams and Mandela, played by Stephen Fry and Frank Bruno, looked at each other in silence. Then Stephen (Adams), instead of continuing with his explanation of how there was no possibility of escape and that this imprisonment was a metaphor for the whole of the country, suddenly came out of character, picked up the bars and said "Look at these complete bar-stewards."

The audience erupted in gales of laughter, destroying the tension that had built up during a beautifully crafted and intensely moving two-hour scene which had linked the plight of Northern Ireland and South Africa in an extraordinarily clever fashion.

Frank Bruno, to his credit, stayed in character and desperately tried to get the scene back on course.

"I'm ducking and diving. You know what I mean, Gerry," he ad-libbed.

But it was too late. By then Stephen had messed it all up and ruined everything. And worse was to come.

At the Dame Ian McKellen Theatre in Leatherhead only a week later (where, incidentally, we had opened to rave reviews in the *Leatherhead Examiner*), Frank's trousers inexplicably fell down just at the point where Mandela was holding up his ball and chain and explaining that the ball was a metaphor for the world.

The pathetic Stephen of course could not resist the chance to ingratiate himself with the audience and joked: "How fitting, given that this play is a lot of balls." Once again the spell was broken. My brilliant play was forgotten and the audience were reduced to laughter, cheers and cries of: "Thank God, good old Stephen has saved the whole evening!"

NEXT WEEK: Stephen ruins the West End opening by not sending me a card and not giving Frank a big, big hug.

© LuvvieTrash in cooperation with The Whingeing Playwright 1995.

FRY'S E-MAIL MESSAGE TO GRAY THAT SAID IT ALL

Sorry. Sorry. Sorry. Sorry. I'm off to Bruges. God bless and get stuffed.

SECRET TALKS WERE 'NOT TALKS' Mayhew makes it clear

by Our Ulster Staff
Bel Fast Mooney

NORTHERN Ireland minister Sir Patrick Mayhew last night denied that he was engaged in talks with the IRA after his announcement that there would be no talks until the IRA handed in their weapons.

"There were no talks," he explained at a press conference, "because they were held in secret. And they were not secret because they were widely publicised. I hope that clarifies the position."

Sir Patrick then left the conference saying that he had to go since he was late for a meeting with someone secret, though it was obviously not anyone with a beard and glasses called Gerry.

Sir Patrick is 73.

THE GOAL THAT NEVER WAS

WORLD OF SOCCER

Computer technology solves world's biggest mystery

by Our Holiday Relief Staff **Cilla Season and Phil Space**

THE WORLD of soccer was rocked to its foundations by two Oxford scientists who, with the aid of computer enhancement techniques, have finally showed that Neasden FC *have* actually scored a goal.

The goal happened in the 1966 North London Relegation League International Charity Shield Final against German challengers A.C. Lederhosen (Reserves).

GEOFF WORST

In extra time veteran striker Baldy Pevsner, aiming at his own goal, miskicked and pierced the German defence.

The ball hit the underside of the German crossbar, bounced onto the grass and then flew out of the ground.

The referee was unsighted at the time since he was being assaulted by irate Neasden fans (Sid and Doris Bonkers) and he disallowed the goal.

The Germans went on to win 44-0.

But now the scientists have shown that the ball *did* cross the line and Pevsner should have gone down in history as the first man ever to score for Neasden.

Last night an ashen-faced Ron Knee said: "This is heartbreaking. To find out after all this time that we were within an inch of glory is too much. This could have been the turning point for this club and for British football."

LATE SCORE

World of Leather
Pre-Season Friendly

Athletikos Theodoracopoulos (Athens) 27 (Kos 6, Naxos 5, Paxos 4, Ios 4, Rodos 3, Parakolos 3, Montgomery Massivebird 2)

Neasden 0

FROM MARKS & SPENCER

To anyone who may have bought the Greenbury Report between 14th and 24th July

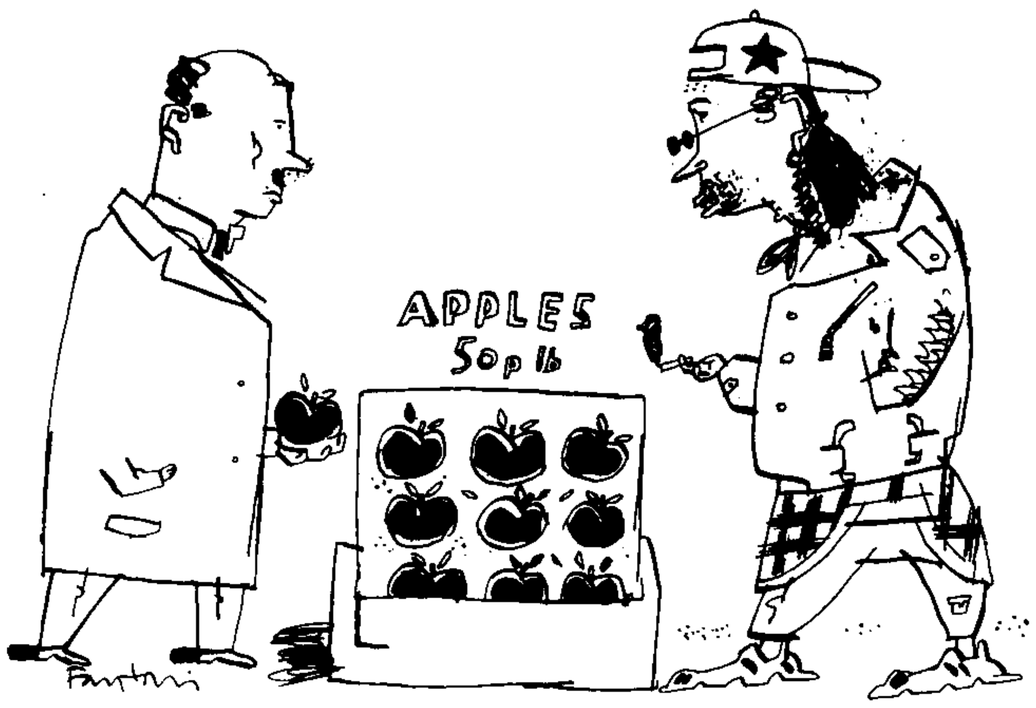
We regret that the Greenbury Report has been found to be defective in the section dealing with tax on share options. The manufacturers now recognise that the design is flawed and if used could cause extreme damage to middle-management bank accounts.

Please return the Report at once and do not, repeat, not, go on the *Today* programme announcing that you have implemented tax changes as a result of the Greenbury Report.

FROM MARKS & SPENCER

To the manufacturers of swimwear similar in design to our own

Tough.



"What do they do?"

THE TIMES SEPTEMBER 1 1939

Time To Do Nothing

by Simon Jenkins, Alan Clark, Ann Leslie and others.

THOSE of us who really understand the situation in Eastern Europe know that there is only one sensible course of action for Britain to adopt in this lamentable crisis.

Just because we have all been reading stories of atrocities and supposedly innocent civilians being ethnically cleansed, the more excitable commentators have been clamouring for military action against Herr Hitler.

But anyone who understands the logic of realpolitik as we do would know that this is just hysterical knee-jerk wishful thinking.

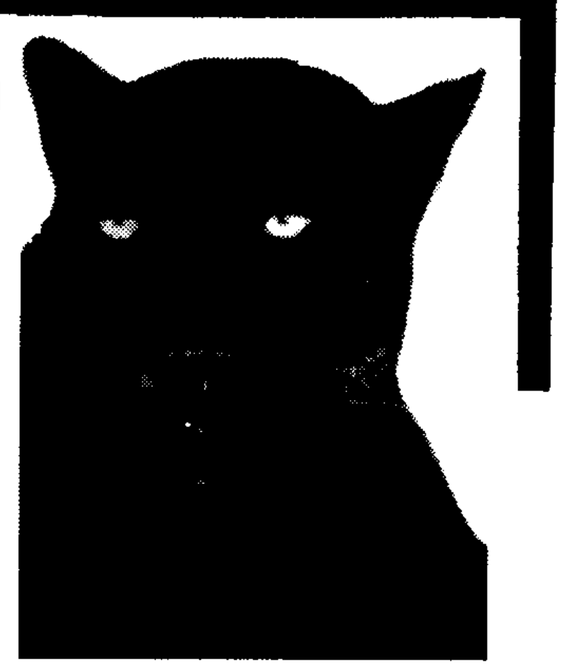
Do we really want young British lives sacrificed in a foreign quarrel?

Poland is a far-away country in which we British have no strategic or any other interest. What the Germans and the Poles choose to do to each other in the heat of war is entirely their own business. We should let them get on with it. Yes, there will be casualties, but they will not be British.

If the sentimental, whingeing interventionists get their way, all informed opinion (ie us) agrees that Britain could easily get drawn into a war which could go on for years. It could even escalate into a world-wide conflagration.

No, it is time for wiser counsel to prevail. We must recognise that Herr Hitler and his plans for a Greater Germany are a fact of life. If we really desire peace, it is vital that we should keep out of this mess completely. We must do nothing and do it now.

BEAST OF BOSNIA Latest



THE MYSTERIOUS killer known as the Beast of Bosnia *does* officially exist, according to Government experts.

The Beast, who is said to have terrorised the countryside around Bosnia killing men, women and children, was for a long time dismissed as "a pussycat" by the Government.

Photographs of the beast ordering the massacre of civilians were described by officials as "nothing more than a hoax".

However the Beast has recently struck again and this time there can be little doubt that it is a genuine monster.

"The Government really must believe us this time," said villagers "and do something about it."

Little is known of the beast except that it is the size of a man, has a mane of white hair and answers to the name of Dr Radovan Karadjic.

GRAND EYE COMPETITION

NOW IT COULD BE YOU TO NAME GAZZA'S LOVECHILD!

Study the names below and tick the one of your choice:

- ☐ Bazza
- ☐ Gizza
- ☐ Hezza
- ☐ Pizza
- ☐ Rozzer
- ☐ Dominic Lawson

Whichever name wins most support from Eye readers will automatically be given to Gazza's toddler!

■ **From T C Lakeman, general secretary, Jersey Ostomy Society.**

ON behalf of the Jersey Ostomy Society I would like to congratulate all those involved with the Bowels Open Day recently held in the Endoscopy Unit at the General Hospital.

Jersey Evening Post

"You gotta take care of the supervisor," says Fred Burgess, who shags garbage cans and plastic sacks on the truck driven by Edmund Helekahi.

Honolulu Advertiser

Poetry Corner

Sir Stephen Spender O.M.

So. Farewell then
Sir Stephen.

The last great poet
Of the twentieth century.

I cannot remember
Any of your poems.
Unfortunately.

Did you ever write any?

Never mind. You were
A great friend
Of Auden and Isherwood
In the Thirties.

E.J. Thribb
(Poet and friend of Keith)

Reprinted from the Daily Telegraph

Edna Man Dead

THE father-in-law of TV's Edna Everage has died, it was reported in London yesterday.

Actor Barry Humphries, who plays the "housewife superstar", was said to be "very sad" at the loss.

His father-in-law, a Mr Stephen Spender, was described as a poet.

● BARCLAYS de Zoete Wedd, the merchant-banking arm of Barclays Bank, is at risk of losing its role as adviser on the £2.5 billion sale of Nuclear Electric, reports The Mail on Sunday. It cites fall-out from the controversial sale of PowerGen and National Power.

Sunday Times

"... 100 million quid to subsidise the opera it's outrageous do you go to the opera? no nor do I nor does anyone why should we give our money to allow a few toffs to get in to see it on the cheap? why doesn't the money go to something worthwhile? they reckon for that amount you could buy 150 kidney machines or 250 heart scanners or goodness knows how many operations for sick kiddies it's obscene when you think about it and someone on television said cancer research is crying out for money if I'd have known when I was buying my tickets that my money was all going to allow the snobs in Covent Garden to have another gin and tonic in the interval I wouldn't have bought them well I probably would actually but if I won all the money I'd give a lot of it away to a proper charity why does opera need £100 million anyway? I thought the Arts Council already gave them a fortune it's a rip-off someone should do something about it I think this week I'll try a different formula I noticed in the last three weeks there have been a lot of numbers under ten still it's only a bit of fun and what's £50 a week anyway? ..."

Celeb

LIGGER

IF I WAS HUGH GRANT I'D HAVE BEEN QUITE HAPPY WITH THAT COURT SENTENCE FOR LEWD BEHAVIOUR.
YEAH.
NEWS
HUGH YOU SHOOKER
HE GETS FINED £250, ORDERED TO PAY £750 LEGAL COSTS, AND IS PUT ON PROBATION FOR TWO YEARS.
HE'S GOT TO GO ON AN AIDS INSTRUCTION COURSE AS WELL THOUGH.
QUITE RIGHT TOO, BARRY.
WHENEVER I WANT A HOOKER I TELL ONE OF MY AIDES TO GO OUT AND GET ME ONE.

THOSE LABOUR LANDSLIDES

1945

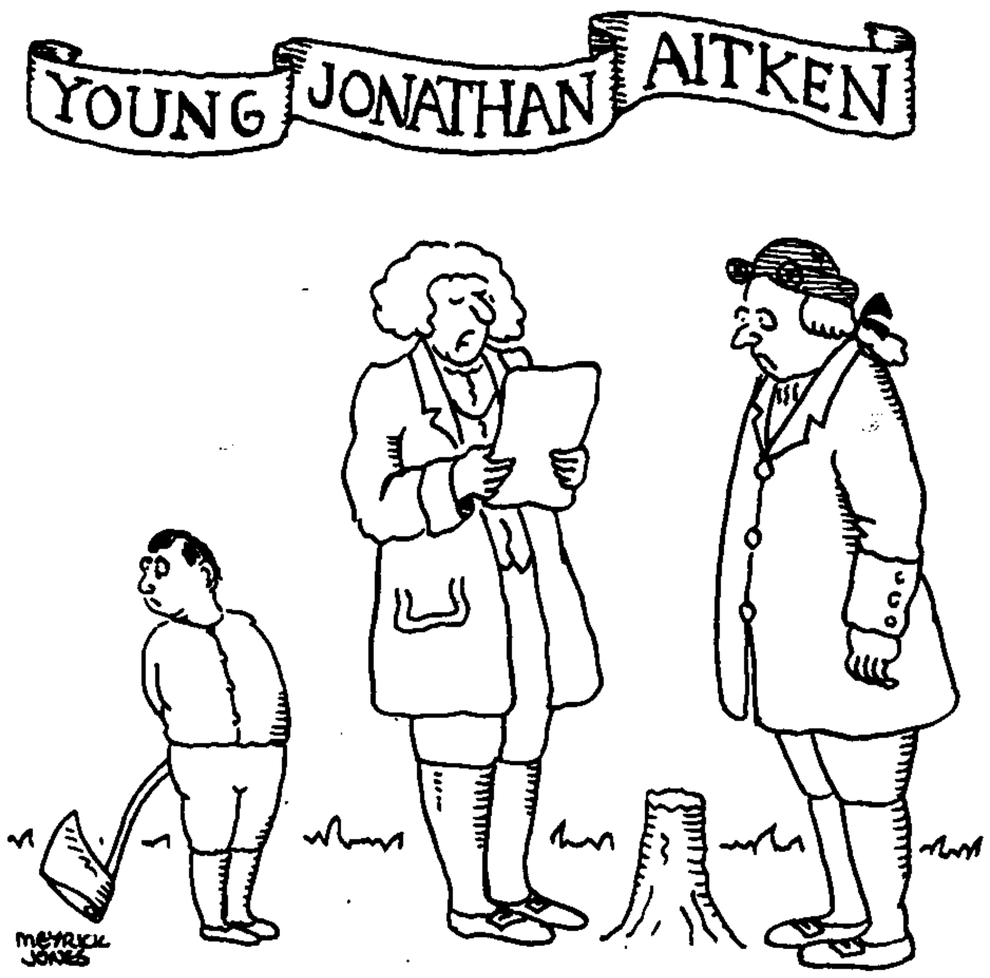
We're going to have a new world

1964

We're going to have a new Britain

1997

We're going to have... er... a new Government



"At the time of my client's denial, he understood you to be referring to another cherry tree which he had in fact not chopped down"

EXCLUSIVE TO ALL NEWSPAPERS

WHOHE TO LEAVE SO WHAT

by Our Music Staff **Zak Nerd**

THE whole world was openly crying in the streets last night at the earthshattering announcement that Whohe, one of the fab five members of chart topsters SO WHAT, was to pursue a solo career.

Whohe plans to make a very bad single and then fade into obscurity.

"It just seems the right time to make this move," he said.

Later a spokesman for SO WHAT responded to the news, claiming that the band would survive Whohe's departure. "The remaining members of SO WHAT plan to continue with their heavy schedule," he said. "We are

looking at a couple more albums, a further split, a court case, bankruptcy and a long twilight playing in '90s retro-nights' in pubs around Guildford."

TODAY'S REPORTS

Report On Guidelines For The Renumeration Of Senior Executives In British Industry

by SIR VERY-RICHARD GREEDBURY, Head of Sandwichforce, the Portable Catering Division of Marks and Spencer plc

Findings of the Committee

1. It's perfectly OK for these chaps to be paid as much as they like.

2. Er...

3. That's it.

Sir V.R. Greenbacks

Report On The Role Of The Bank Of England During The Collapse Of Barings Bank

by SIR EDWARD GEORGE, Governor of the Bank of England.

Findings of the Committee

1. The Bank of England is entirely exonerated from any part in this regrettable business.

2. Er...

3. That's it.

Sir E. George

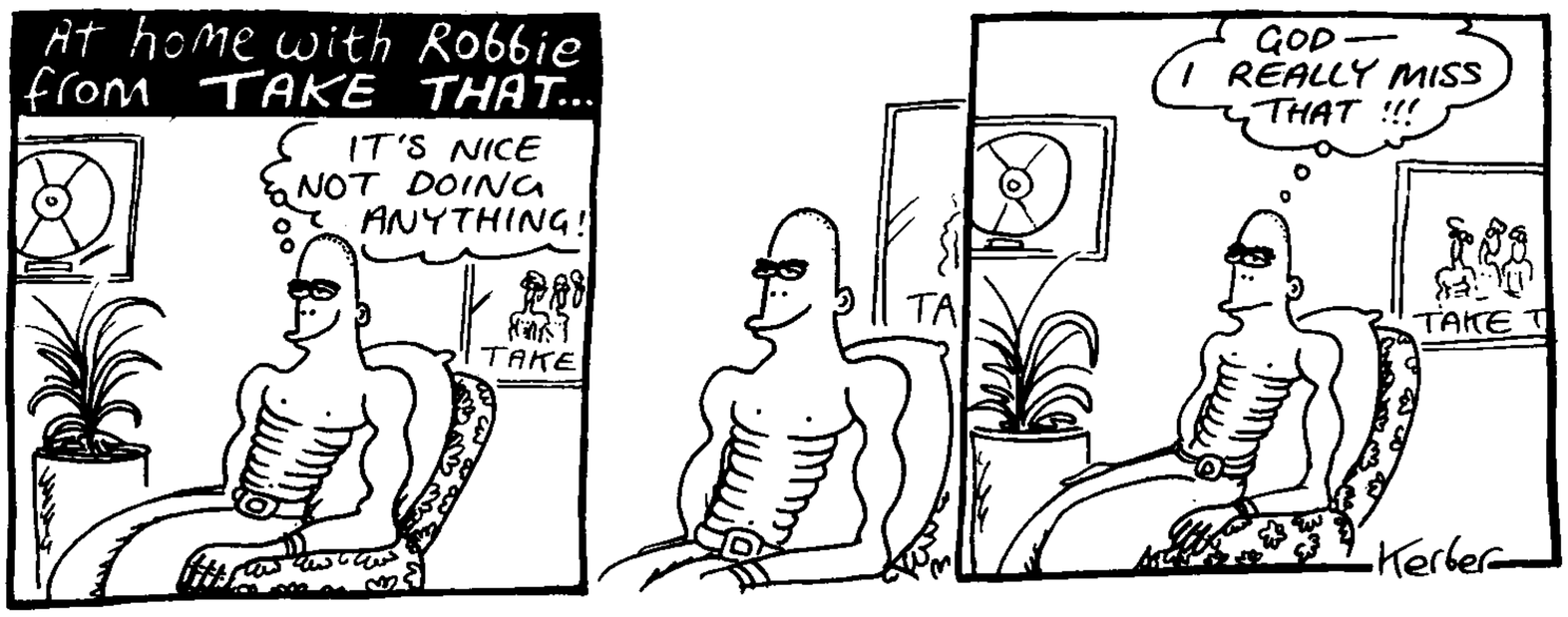
Report Of An Inquiry Into The Departure Of "Robbie" From The Popular Singing Group Take That

by MR JUSTICE POPPLECARROT

(That's enough reports — Ed)

SUPERMODELS

Neil Kerber



QUOTES

THEY SAY

'Elizabeth Hurley's contract with Estee Lauder remains unchanged.'

— Stanley Clegg, father of Pte Lee Clegg, speaking today minutes after his paratrooper son was freed, four years after he was jailed for the murder of a teenage joyrider in Belfast.

Derby Evening Telegraph

NURSERY TIMES

FRIDAY, JULY 28 1995

RAPID REACTION FORCE READY TO GO

by Our UN correspondent Christopher Gunless

The Grand Old Duke of York's regiment, consisting of ten thousand men, was on standby last night for immediate despatch up the hill.

"What I am to do," said commander the Grand Old Duke, "is to march my men straight up to the top of the hill and then withdraw as fast as is humanly possible.

"I don't want to get bogged down at the top of the hill and my main priority is not to lose any men when I'm up there.

"But rest assured," he continued. "This will send a clear message to the world. That when we're up we are up. And when we are down we are down. And when we are only half-way up, we are fulfilling the UN mandate exactly."

On Other Pages

All King's Horses and Men Powerless To Assist Wounded Humpty

'Beyond our brief,' says General

Notes & Queries

A service by our readers for our readers (as seen in all other newspapers)

QUESTION: Could you please tell us what the American army is for, if it is not allowed to fight? — *Mrs Ethel Rusbridger, Canary Wharf.*

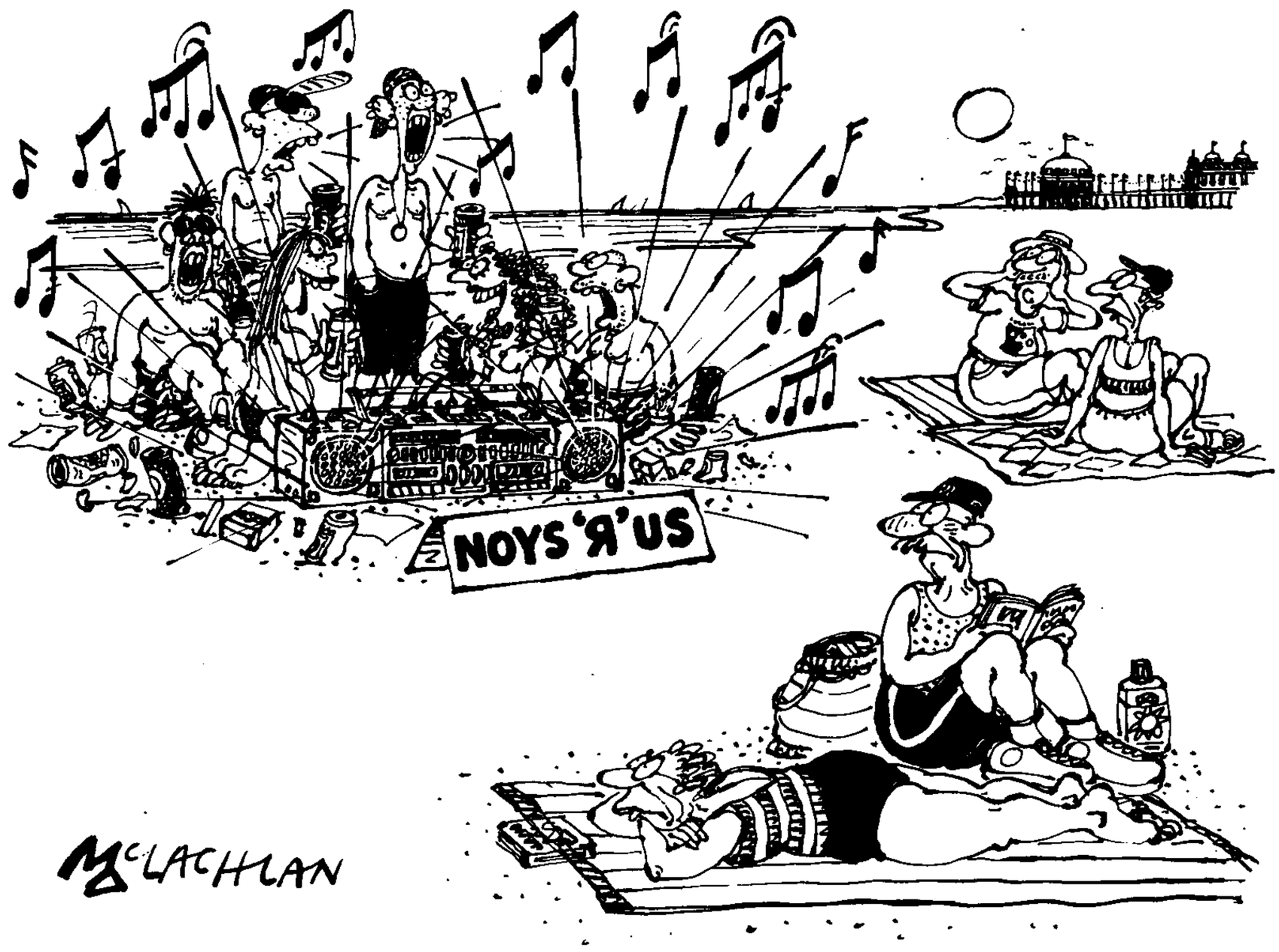
☐ THE American army is an organisation set up to enable members of the gay and lesbian community to exercise their rights by joining it. It also provides an equal-opportunity framework for women to participate in command situations which do not involve combat. — *General P.C. Dolittle III Jnr.*

QUESTION: Does anyone know why the British army has to ask the Americans for helicopters, since we have already spent billions of pounds buying helicopters from them in the first place? — *M. Heseltine, 10a Downing Street. Deputy Prime Minister and First Lord of the Jungle.*

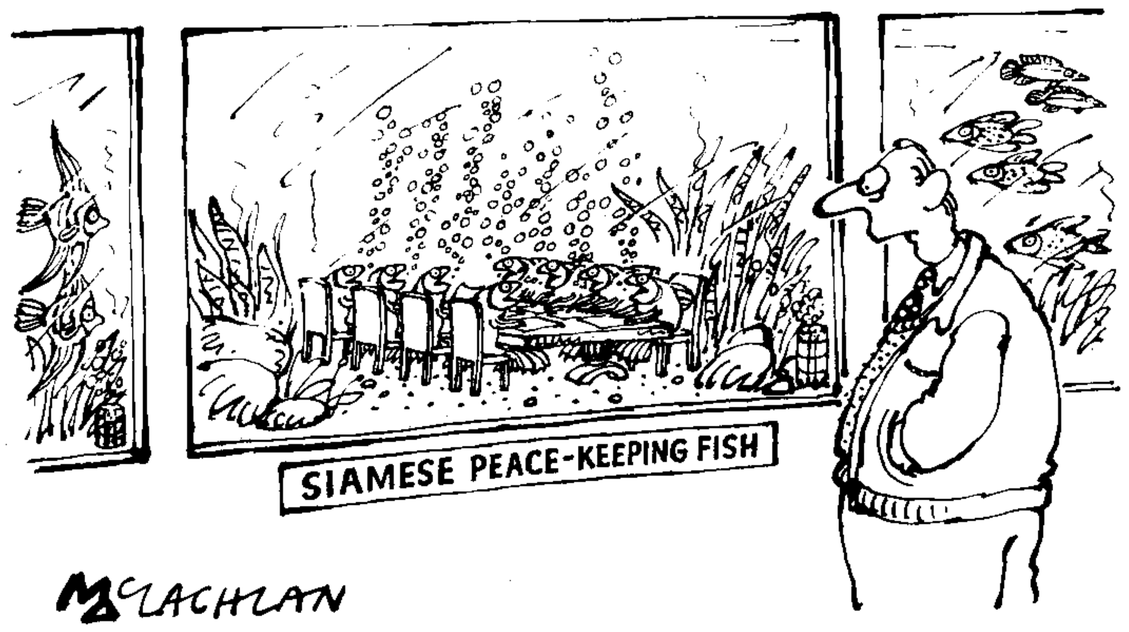
☐ READER Heseltine is quite right to say that we have spent billions of pounds on buying US helicopter stock, but there is a snag. They are the wrong sort of helicopters for dealing with the hilly terrain of the former Yugoslavia. This means that we have to ask for American helicopters, which we know they are not going to give us, so that we have yet another excuse for doing nothing. — *Brig. Trumper-Smythe.*

ANSWERS TO PREVIOUS QUESTIONS: It is quite wrong for Professor Norman Stone to claim that the reason Fox's Glacier Mints have a picture of a polar bear and not a fox on the wrapping is because they were previously known as Bear's Glacier Mints. The explanation is quite simple. The artist, commissioned by Mr Ezekiel Fox (1858-1907) to design the original wrapper, was an Eskimo artist, Mr Mahood, who had never seen a fox. In the Inuit language all four-legged creatures are designated by the same word, which means "bear". Hence the charming drawing with which generations of mint-lovers have become familiar. — *Alan Sweetpaper, Editor, Mints and Mintmen, London EC1*

ANSWERS PLEASE: Is it true that frogs can jump backwards? Is there such a thing as a left-handed spoon? Is it true that the EC have regulated the size of toilet tissue? Who writes Jeffrey Archer's books? Why does the *Eye* keep printing that unfunny picture of Andrew Neill and the Asian girl?



AQUARIUM



THE DEAN OF LINCOLN
An Apology

Last week, in common with all other newspapers, particularly the *Daily Mail*, we ran several pages of reporting with full colour pictures on what we described in our front-page headline as "The Shame of the Bonking Dean and the Innocent Vergess". Other articles such as "He Said He Was Jogging But We Know He Was Shagging", "Why Dirty Vicars Are Bringing The C of E Into Disrepute" and "If You Think He Did It, phone our Hotline 0898-112" may have given the impression that in some way we thought that the Dean of Lincoln had been guilty of conducting an improper relationship with Ms Verity Freestone.

We now accept that there was not a jot or tittle of truth in Ms Freestone's story, which, it was apparent to even the most casual observer, was a tissue of lies and hysterical fantasies conjured up in the sick imagination of a lot of journalists desperate for a lurid legover story for the silly season, rather than write about Bosnia *(shurely 'poor, unhappy woman in need of pastoral care'? Ed).*

A Governor of the Bank of England writes

Every week a well-known taxi driver is asked to comment on a issue of topical importance. This week, owing to the absence of Sid Nozzer (Cab no. 14367) who has been unavoidably delayed at Kos airport owing to an air-traffic controller's dispute, we have invited a similar figure to stand in for him.

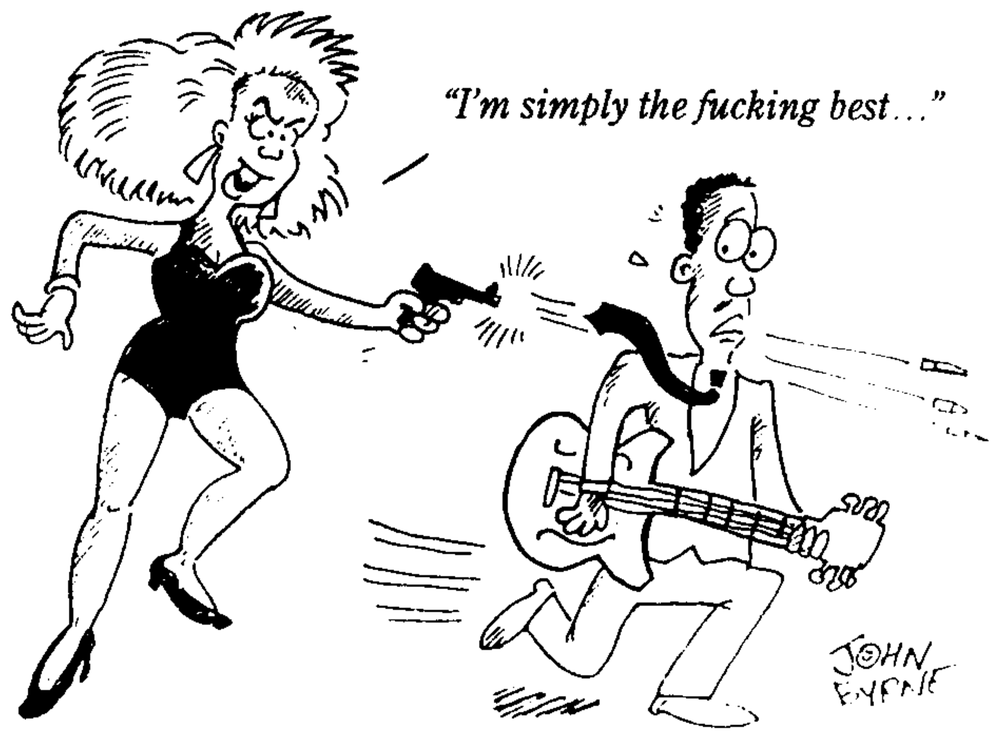
The Barings Collapse
by Eddie George

Blimey, that Nick Leeson. What a nerve! 827 million big ones! Amazing, isn't it? And

no one knew nuffink about it. Stands to reason 'e's got to be the only one to blame. D'you know what we should do wiv 'im? Pack 'im off to Singapore and let 'em cut his tongue out or whatever they do. At least that would keep him quiet. I had that Pennant-Rea in the back of my office. Him and his girl friend. We had to have the carpets cleaned.

NEXT WEEK: Sir Peter Baring on "Why it wasn't my fault either."

IKE AND TARANTINO TURNER



THE ALTERNATIVE ROCKY HORROR SERVICE BOOK

No. 94. A Service of Reconciliation Following The Dismissal By A Consistory Court Of Allegations Concerning The Irregular Behaviour By A Clerk In Holy Orders.

President: Brethren, we are met here in the presence of the almighty media, to give thanks for the safe deliverance of our servant N or M (here he may say "the Dean of Lincoln" or such other) from the vile calumnies of thy servant N or M *(here he may say "Verger Freelove" or other such).*

Hacks: Shame, it was a great story.

READING

"And, lo, it came to pass that there was a young verger, known as Verity, which meaneth the truth.

"And the Verger went unto the Bishop saying "The Dean is a bastard" and she wept bitterly.

"And the Bishop saith unto her 'Did he lie with you?'

"And the young woman saith, 'How can this be, since I am a young verger and have known not a man.'

"And the Bishop saith, 'Never fear. Thou cans't always exaggerate a bit.'

"Here endeth the reading."

Hacks: It's still a great story.

(The congregation shall then hug each other or be tactile in some suitably innocent manner. The choir shall sing the anthem "Blow, blow thou witless Dean". The Dean shall then lead the Prayers for Reconciliation and Forgiveness)

Dean *(for it is he):* O Lord, we ask thy compassion at this time for all those who bear false witness, and particularly for those sad, deluded, pathetic, psychotic creatures who need a good kick up the backside if you ask me.

All: Yeah, go for it.

President: We next pray for all bishops and clergy, and particularly for Robert, Bishop of this Diocese, who hath been so totally hopeless about this whole affair, and whose mishandling and incompetence deserve a really good kick up the backside if you ask me.

All: Nice one, reverend. Ooh, aah, Cantua.

HYMN

"Jesus wants me for a Sun front page" (from the *Rupert Murdoch 100 Hymns For Today Newspaper*)

(The Dean shall then jog out of the church pursued by a vast crowd of prurient, slavering hacks)

© Carey and Sharey Productions (in association with the PowerGen Church of England)

BLAIR-MURDOCH SUMMIT

That Speech In Full

Blair: Ladies and gentlemen and Your Holiness The Supreme Ruler of Sun and Sky Rupertus Murdochus Maximus, King of Kings, Timeslord of all you survey. Greetings from the planet England.

Murdochus: Greetings, Pommy Weakling. Get on with it. You've got two minutes.

Blair: I come in suppliance. Not to beg for your support at the next election. Oh no. We speak as equals. I as the leader of the New Labour Party. And you as Supreme Ruler of the Universe, Grand Controller of all known media that are in the earth or beyond it.

Murdochus: I said get on with it, creep.

Blair: You and I, O Great One, have much in common. We are both admirers of Mrs Thatcher. We both believe in the free market. We are both opposed to the trade unions. We both favour a grant-maintained independent sector in education. We are both devout Christians. And so on. We are the radicals now. And if we win the election, as with your help I know we shall, we shall radically do nothing at all to interfere with your inalienable right to own as many newspapers and TV stations, both satellite and terrestrial, as you want.

Murdochus: Here is the cheque for your expenses.

Blair: Oh thank you, thank you, most munificent of princes.

Murdochus: Time's up. Throw him out.

NEW ENGLISH DICTIONARY

SAFE
adj. Dangerous, lethal, likely to be over-run by murderous soldiers. Used to describe area where people are liable to be killed in large numbers.

RAPID
adj. Slow-moving, stationary or non-existent. Used to describe group of soldiers who will never turn up at their destinations, or only when it is too late.

PROTECTION
subst. Abandoning people to their fate, esp. unarmed ethnic minorities.

UNITED
adj. Paralysed by division, rancour and inability to agree on anything. Used particularly of nations.

(That's enough weasel words. Ed)

Luckily for the Pied Piper, all the Hamelin rats belonged to the Orange Order

KREMLIN ISSUES NEW PHOTOGRAPH OF YELTSIN

FOR weeks it was feared that Yeltsin was ill and could not continue as President. Many thought he had vanished. But now the Kremlin has released reassuring new pictures showing him to be fit, well, and the recipient of an honorary degree from Dundee University.

DIARY

Even this cynical organ — actually, I find a lot of it most amusing, and so, might I add, does the Prime Minister, acting on my advice — anyway, even this cynical organ must acknowledge that John Major scored a resounding victory last month over the Moaning Minnie tendency of the Conservative Party. That's good news for the Party, good news for the country and, above all, good news for me. Once again, it proves that, to coin a phrase used by the people who really know, and by this I mean your average decent, salt-of-the-earth party workers: "Archer Backs Winners". This has been true ever since I won my Olympic Gold Medals. Rumour has it — and the Prime Minister privately confirms it — that without my public support of John Major's candidacy on BBC Radio Solent's peak "Around Midnight" slot, on BBC Radio Scotland's very popular "Drivetime in the Outer Hebrides" programme and finally on the News at Ten (the excellent Welsh language news programme on BBC Radio Glamorgan) his campaign would never have taken off.

I rang through to Downing Street to offer my support the moment I heard the news. "Lord Archer here," I said to the telephonist. "Put me straight through to the Prime Minister." The Prime Minister's response was immediate. He was too busy to take any calls. "How best can I help at this crucial time?" I asked the senior telephonist. Within less than an hour, I had been put straight through to his campaign headquarters. Their response was immediate. "No one is available to take your call at the moment," they reported. "Please leave your name and number after the beep".

Acting on my own initiative — but with the private backing, it is widely rumoured, of the Prime Minister and Her Majesty — I made my way to College Green, determined to blow the trumpet for John Major's candidature. "Lord Archer!" a young man buttonholed me. "Can we persuade you to say a few words to camera in support of Mr Major?"

"Rather!" I replied. Without further ado I spoke completely off-the-cuff, furrowing my brows to show I was really serious and summoning the faithful to Vote Major. "He's stuck by me through thick and thin, he's elevated me to the Peerage, he's ignored those disgraceful allegations over the share business, he still counts on me for sound advice, he would certainly have come to my Garden Party if he hadn't had a slight sniffle and

LORD ARCHER

rumour has it he's going to make me Foreign Secretary in the next reshuffle!" I said.

"Just the boost we needed for our election campaign!" said the young man when I'd finished. "May I introduce myself? John Redwood."

Flattering, indeed, to be made a fuss of by a very clever young man who looked as if he might just be a future Prime Minister. "You absolutely must come to my next garden party, John," I said. "We could both profit from a frank discussion. Krug to your taste?" Now that Mr Redwood has been relegated to the back benches, he probably doesn't have much time for garden parties, so I've saved his embarrassment by passing his invitation on to young William Hague, for whom I have always had a lot of time, ever since I was Party Chairman.

My new multi-million pound novel, all written by me, is out soon, and what's more I wrote it all myself, right down to the title, "Strickly Confidenshall". It's about two men, one rich, one poor and one middling, all four locked in mortal combat over a matter of honour and a millions of pounds, or so my friends in the publishing industry tell me. It's already a worldwide bestseller before a single copy has been bought. I would hazard a pretty shrewd guess that it has already earned me enough money to buy a brand new Tiepolo, though my sons prefer an Alfa Romeo. But believe me, money isn't everything. If it was, why on earth would I want more? A lot of nonsense has been written about so-called "insider dealing", and let me assure you my solicitors are on standby. A spotless reputation is of crucial importance to a man in my position, and worth buying at all costs.

I am often asked how it is that I came to be the right-hand-man — the shoulder to cry on, if you will — for two such very different Prime Ministers as John and Margaret. I reply it's because I'm simply not afraid to give them my frank advice, I'm not ever one to flinch from a bit of honest-to-goodness truth-telling. It probably dates back to my days as a leading High Court Judge.

For instance, I remember Margaret asking me when she was in power: "So what about this Community Charge idea, Jeffrey? D'y'think we're onto a winner?"

I paused, knowing I would have to choose my words very carefully indeed. "Very much so," I said, for all my political instincts were against it. In the past, she had followed my advice on council house sales, on trades union reform, on the Invasion of the Falklands. But for the very first time Margaret chose to ignore my advice: and we all know the result. Now, whenever I am lunching with, say, Deng Xioping (terrific fan of my books, incidentally: we were at the University of Beijing together) or President Clinton (an old friend from my days as a pioneering NASA astronaut at Cape Canaveral), I remind them of Margaret's fatal error. And, my god, they respect me for my frankness.

Our British press have what the Australians — rumour has it Prime Minister Keating regards me as his unofficial Chancellor — call the Tall Poppy Syndrome. This means that when the media see a high-achiever such as myself, who's quite simply not afraid to roll up his sleeves and do his bit for his country, they come down on him like a ton of tall poppies. Not since my day as the youngest Home Secretary since the War have I come across such wilful destruction. But let me tell you this, it is my avowed intention to fight back against the forces of arrant truth with the sword of injustice. The other day, I heard that a gutter journalist was sniffing around into my past, quibbling over this achievement, that world record, this major literary award. I was forced to write to his editor, an old friend of mine from my Harvard days. Have these people no pride in their country, no wish to see us win, win and win again? If questions concerning my captaincy of the English Cricket XI and my record in leading the team to victory in five consecutive Tests continue to be asked of any person or persons, I shall have no hesitation in placing the matter in the hands of my solicitors.

Caretaker (Part-Time)
LITERACY SUPPORT SERVICE, BISLEY CENTRE, BISLEY, WOKING, SURREY
£4,674 per hour to work 3 hours per day

Surrey County Council

You could start with crab and sweetcorn soup or Szechuan aromatic fuck served with pancakes with spring onions, vegetables and hoi sin sauce.

Eating Out in Essex

A TIRED, TESTED, PROVEN AND GENUINE BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY

Peerless Plus advert, Observer

Literary Review

Who Dares Writes

The One That Got Away
Chris Ryan
(Century £14.99)

NEVER say that publishers can't take a hint. One of the great publishing successes of recent times has been the Gulf War memoir *Bravo Two Zero*. Published under the pseudonym "Andy McNab", it described an SAS patrol in Iraq which went badly wrong.

Eight men were helicoptered in. Their briefing had been inadequate, their communications systems failed, and after being detected and attacked, they tried to escape on foot. During a night march, the patrol accidentally split up. Subsequently, two soldiers died of exposure, one was shot, four captured and tortured, and one escaped over the border into Syria.

Andy McNab, the sergeant in command of the patrol, was one of those captured and not released until the war ended. *Bravo Two Zero*, his bullish account of his experiences, stuffed with slang about "ragheads" and "slotting", sold a third of a million copies in hardback. There's a permanent appetite for war stories and there haven't been any homegrown ones since the Falklands ("slotting" the Irish somehow not quite fitting the bill).

What matter that this patrol had been a failure? That only made it all the more suitable for the British public, which in the profound perversity of its soul likes nothing better than a good disaster through which to soldier on. Nobody knew this better than McNab himself who told an interviewer: "Cock-ups bring out the qualities people want to read about. Look at Arnhem, for instance. The reasons for the cock-ups don't matter."

The book is reputed to have now earned him some £4 or £5 million. This triumph was a little tarnished when last year two sick students, James Petrolini and Richard Elsey, were convicted of murdering a Mr Mohammed el-Sayed (ie slotting a raghead) in Bayswater and in court cited *Bravo Two Zero* as one of their inspirations. Both had been engulfed by pathetic fantasies about belonging to the SAS; Elsey had actually modelled himself on McNab.

Immediately after the trial, McNab published an article disclaiming any responsibility. "*Bravo Two Zero* is violent; it does describe people being killed. I cannot believe, though, that either Petrolini or Elsey read the whole book." Anyway, they belong to a generation in which "the stupid ones cannot tell the difference between the real thing and a Nintendo game" he concluded.

Naturally, this nasty demonstration that the audience for these military adventure books consists of unhealthy adolescent fantasists (and entirely of unhealthy males, of course) has not deterred the publishers.

Century have gone straight for them. The cover of *The One That Got Away* is a dead ringer for *Bravo Two Zero*. It has the same red and yellow flame colours, the same Who Dares Wins badge. It even piggybacks by announcing: "The true hero of *Bravo Two Zero* tells his own story."

Oddly, the contents are more interesting than this packaging would suggest. Ryan, the only man who escaped, is a more restrained writer than McNab and gives a quite different account of the same events.

It's not that he's a particularly sensitive type, giving for example, this memorable description of the day he had to put down Turbo, his dog, for grovelling too much: "I shouted 'Cats!' and he hurtled between my legs. I put one round straight down into the top of his skull but he stayed on his feet, his tail wagging against my knees. A split second I gave him another, and then, as he was still standing, I put one between his eyes. Poor Turbo!" Beats James Herriot, doesn't it?

But his version of the mission is altogether less gung-ho. None of the preparation was good enough, the maps were useless, the loads were too heavy, the radio frequencies were wrong, the satellite pictures were upside down, one of the men died because his courage failed.

More particularly, the patrol was badly led — by one Andy McNab. Originally, he explains, the patrol had a different leader. "Unfortunately his command lasted literally a few minutes...and his place was taken by Sergeant Andy McNab." "Words came out of him so fast that you never quite knew where you were," writes Ryan disapprovingly.

The criticism continues. In McNab's own account, when the patrol first arrived in the Iraqi desert, he wisely made them do nothing for 10 minutes so they could "tune in to the new environment". In Ryan's version, McNab simply seemed "semi-stunned" and did not know what to do. A few pages later he alleges McNab devised a mad plan to abandon their original orders and attack an anti-aircraft gun nearby. The catastrophic splitting-up of the patrol is put down to McNab's failure to remember that he could have used the radios to re-group.

After that, Ryan's adventures continue without McNab. Eventually, he learns that two other patrols that went out at the same time had wisely "both come straight back" when they had taken stock of their locations, having apparently been more intelligently led.

Back in England, McNab avoids him. "He didn't seem to want to make contact...It was as if he didn't want to come round and face me...I was disappointed that a mate of mine could behave in that way, and I could only put it down to jealousy and the fact that I'd got away while he was caught...To me it was pretty sad that anyone could carry on in a way so alien to the spirit of the Regiment, which values companionship and loyalty above everything," says Ryan.

Quite pointedly, he makes not a single reference in his text to McNab having published a book at all, even though his own exists only as a response to it. As an example of literary rivalry, it makes the Amis/Barnes feud look pretty mimsy.

The One Who Got Away, has, incidentally, gone straight to the top of the bestseller lists — presumably ensuring that there'll be three more versions of the story published before we're through. It'll be a silly soldier who doesn't take notes henceforth. Anyone for Bosnia?

BOOKS & BOOKMEN

A GOOD REED?

■ CONGLOMERATES. Don'tcha hate 'em? Clearly Reed Elsevier didn't want to have to reveal to the world that it wished to be shot of its gigantic consumer books division before it sneakily found a buyer, but the world found out.

This was always on the cards since previous chairman, Peter Davis, proud of running a trade books company, resigned in high dudgeon because of the philistinism of his colleagues and was replaced, with dreary inevitability, by an accountant, Ian Irvine.

Irvine and co-chairman Herman Bruggink [sic] have issued a statement in a corporate language which may be spoken somewhere between the UK and the Netherlands but isn't recognised in either country. It is the usual garbage about divestments and "the scientific, professional and business sections of the portfolio and enhanced development plans...Each of the businesses we intend to divest has strong franchises...despite these attractive characteristics, they no longer fit with Reed Elsevier's increasingly focused international and product profile."

With prose like that it's understandable that Reed Elsevier can't understand books by the likes of Roddy Doyle, Sue Townsend, James Kelman and Peter Ackroyd. But what is outrageous is that, yet again, a conglomerate thinks it can first embrace literature, or what aspires to literature, or at least intelligence, and then spit it out without so much as a thank-you-for-having-me, I enjoyed the honour of publishing your books. The contempt shown to authors and their "product" is as extraordinary as is the horrible subservience and sycophancy shown to shareholders and the City.

Hitherto RCB has stood for Reed Consumer Books. Richard Charkin is still said to be trying to find a buyer for the imprints. He liked the idea of a management buyout because, thereafter, RCB would naturally be Richard Charkin Books.

Meanwhile, over at Ealing, Steve Rubin, chairman and chief executive of the Bantam Doubleday Dell international division, has moved on. He plans to be there for two or three years. Why would Bertelsmann, who own that conglomerate, dispatch such a high-powered and successful executive as Rubin to moulder at Ealing, unless he was sentenced to a kind of internal exile, which isn't the case? Why, to integrate Reed Consumer Books into the Bertelsmann empire.

Like dinosaurs, let the conglomerates destroy themselves.

'Bookworm'

FOR SALE
APPLY WITHIN
PART ONE
I'VE BEEN THROUGH YOUR BOOKS - THEY MAKE VERY DISAPPOINTING READING
SNIPCOCK & TWEED FINANCIAL YEAR 96-95
FAIR ENOUGH - HOW ABOUT THE ACCOUNTS?

footnotes

AITKEN'S CD PAST

IN THE same year that Jonathan Aitken MP became a director of the arms company BMARC, the Official Receiver and the Department of Trade and Industry considered taking proceedings to disqualify him from all directorships.

Their concern arose from the MP's directorship of Beaverbrook Investments, and its purchase in 1986 of a company called Oasis Merchandising Services. Oasis was formed in 1985 by a Chichester businessman called Nigel Howick. Howick wanted to supplement his records business, called Stage One, by selling CDs and tapes in motorway outlets. He teamed up with a Gravesend salesman called Brian Smith. Smith tells the *Eye* that his side of the business prospered: "Sales were improving and there were big customers ready to come in." Then, in the autumn of 1986, Beaverbrook Investments took out a mortgage on all the assets of Oasis Merchandising, and a few weeks later bought the whole company.

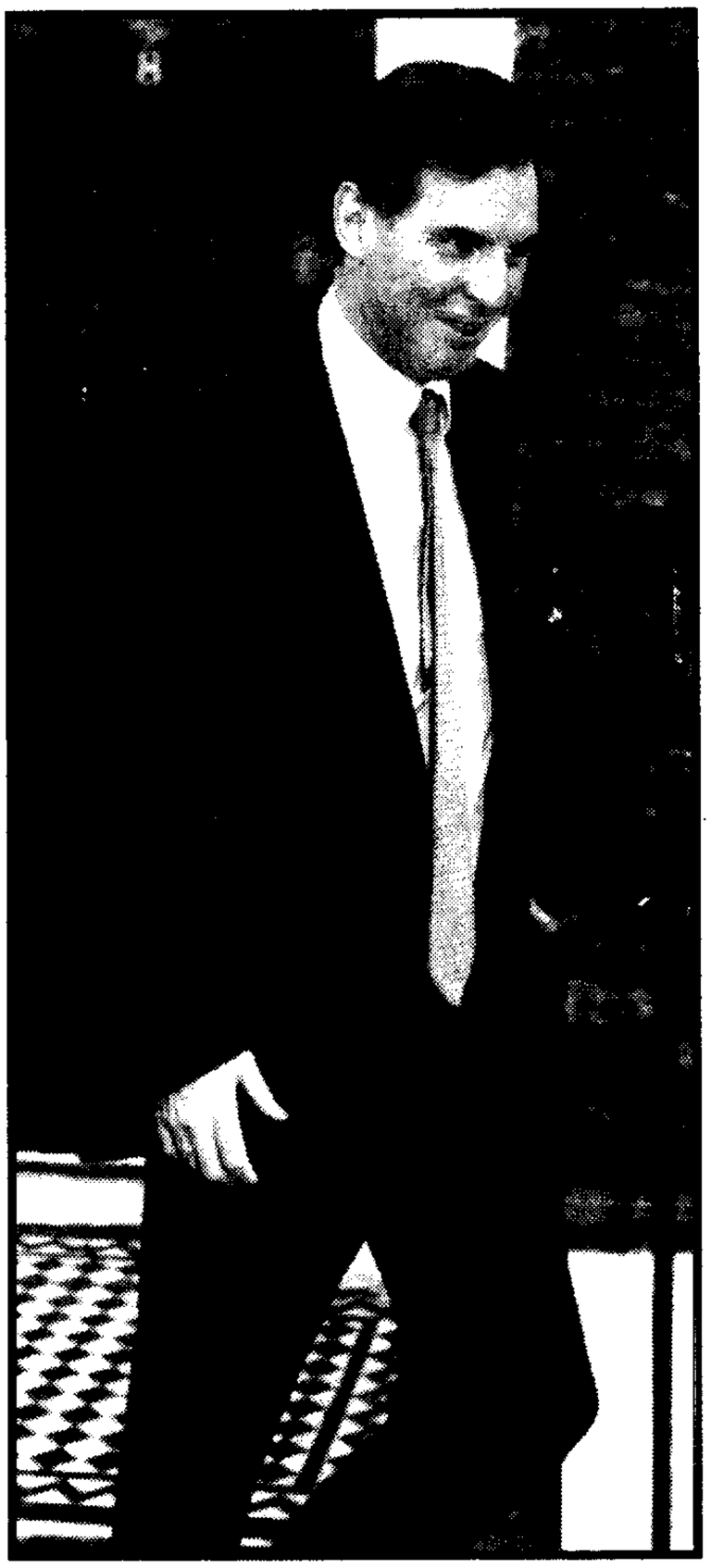
A year later, in November 1987, Oasis was wound up by Beaverbrook, and receivers were called in. In January 1988, both companies were investigated very closely by the Official Receiver in Croydon, whose office on 24 March submitted what they called a "fraudulent trading report" about Oasis. The assistant official receiver, a Mr C.F. Webb, described the allegations in the report as "of a serious nature involving a public company which held a floating charge over the assets of the company which is the subject of this report". He warned that "a prominent Member of Parliament" was involved.

The Department of Trade, which is responsible for the Official Receiver, always insists that inquiries about companies are conducted without fear or favour of the importance of the individuals under investigation. But on this occasion something like panic seems to have gripped the department.

In April a "draft submission" to ministers about the Oasis case was drafted by Graham Horne, the chief examiner of the DTI's prosecutions unit at Companies House. The draft was circulated in the department and amended. One official, Mr G.J.A. Harp, thought the department had been too slow to report the matter to the politicians. He thought that ministers should have been warned "within days of the winding up order".

At once it was decided that Jonathan Aitken's involvement in the case was too hot to handle in the lower reaches, or by ordinary police (though Det Chief Inspector Gale of the Metropolitan Police was kept informed).

In July, Edward Thompson, a senior solicitor at the DTI, attended an anxious meeting at the Serious Fraud Office, to which the case had been referred. The only reason for the referral appears to have been the status of Jonathan Aitken. The chief problem was the "floating charge" on Oasis held by Beaverbrook Investments, which meant that Beaverbrook had first call on all the company's business and assets.



Was this fair to the other creditors? After examining the accounts and the reports of interviews with the main parties, the meeting at the SFO, chaired by Mr C.W. Dickson, decided that there wasn't enough evidence to support a charge of fraudulent trading. The meeting eagerly decided instead to consider taking disqualification proceedings against the directors of Beaverbrook.

Everyone at the meeting agreed that there was a case for a public examination of Jonathan Aitken, and urged the retention of a senior barrister for that purpose. No final decision was taken about possible criminal proceedings, and the inquiries in the department continued apace.

On 2 August, Mr Thompson warned his superiors that Jonathan Aitken was a very powerful businessman and would be likely to fight any disqualification proceedings very hard indeed. The Official Solicitor, then Mr Les Cramp, set in motion a "disqualification report" for the DTI's disqualification unit.

At that stage in mid-August 1988 almost everyone involved from the Official Receiver downwards took the view that disqualification proceedings against the directors of Beaverbrook Investments were appropriate.

But there, rather suddenly, the whole affair screeched to a stop.

On 18 July, the *Eye* submitted a list of questions on this matter to the Department of Trade and Industry. In their reply on 21 July, the DTI confirmed:

1) The Official Receiver's preliminary report "concerning the insolvent trading of the company" on 28 March 1988.

2) The meeting on 28 July 1988 at the SFO, which was attended, say the DTI, by "representatives of the Official Receiver, the Insolvency Service, departmental solicitors and the police".

3) The meetings decision that there wasn't enough evidence for criminal proceedings, and to "consider whether civil disqualification proceedings against the directors were appropriate".

What happened then, was the *Eye*'s main question. The reply suddenly became vague. "It has not yet been possible to trace all the case papers dating back to 1988. One particular resource problem faced by the Official Receiver at the time was some 300 boxes of papers belonging to the company had to be examined".

The outcome was: "No disqualification proceedings were commenced against any director." Quite, but why? The DTI can't be sure. "It appears," they guess, "that the Official Receiver was unable to satisfy himself as to the sufficiency of the evidence in support of unfit conduct on which to base proceedings."

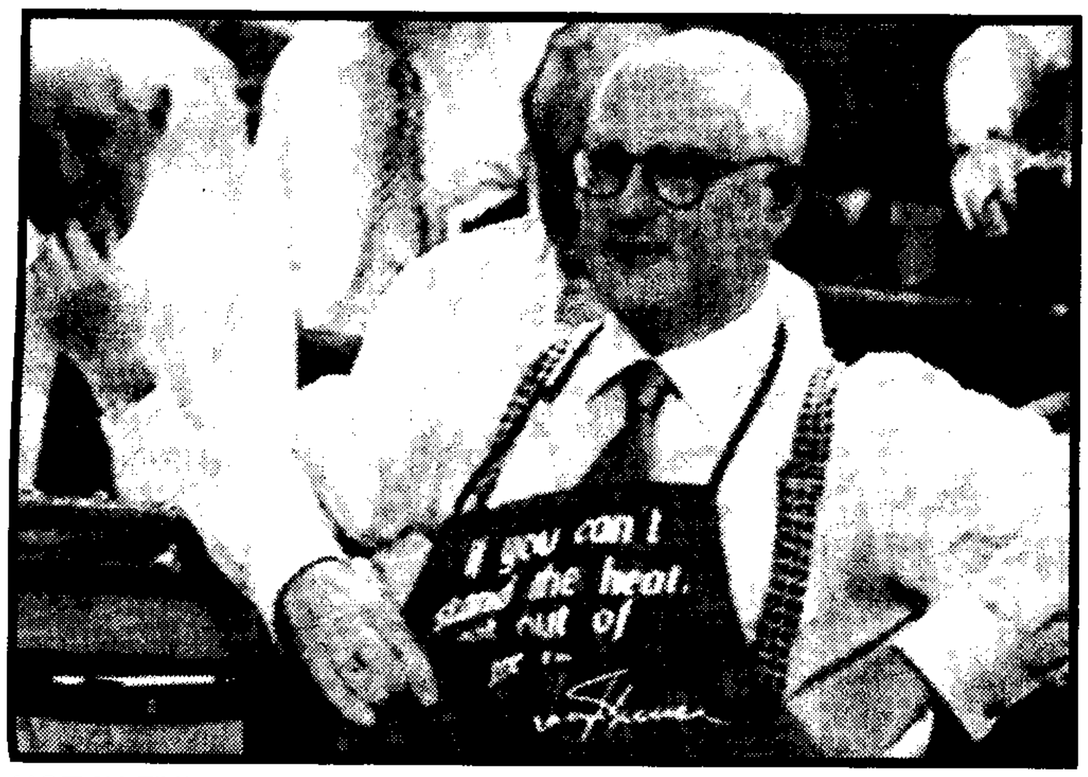
The *Eye* asked: "Was Lord Young, then Secretary of State at the DTI and/or other ministers at the department informed about the proposed disqualification proceedings? If so, what was their reaction?"

For this the department reserved their most mealy-mouthed reply: "There does not appear to have been, from the files recovered to date, any briefing of ministers." If this is true, the panic-stricken reactions of DTI and senior Official Receiver officials from the outset of the inquiry — that ministers should immediately be informed — were scrupulously ignored.

Jonathan Aitken was not disqualified. He held on to his 40-odd directorships, including that of BMARC. In 1992 John Major brought him into the Government as Minister of Defence Procurement; and in 1994 he was promoted to the Cabinet as Chief Secretary to the Treasury, a post from which he has just resigned to make it easier for him to sue Granada Television and the *Guardian*.

Down in Gravesend, Brian Smith still can't understand why his firm was put into receivership. The firm's business, he said, had been sold on twice by receivers to its former competitors and appeared to be flourishing. "I thought it was very successful," he says. "But you know what all these big people are like. They've got loads of money and it's only the people who do the work who in the end suffer, really."

What can he mean?



HOT IN THE KITCHEN: Sir Richard Greenbury

BAD MARKS

IT WAS bad luck for Sir Richard Greenbury that the annual general meeting of the company he chairs, Marks and Spencer, was held in the same week as his CBI Committee's lukewarm and incompetent report on share options.

Marks and Spencer shareholders who attended the meeting were a little surprised to discover that 10 of their executive directors had "exercised" a total of 959,339 options, from which a total of £1.8m cascaded into their pockets. As always, Sir Richard led from the front — and he still has plenty of options left. Just over a million, in fact.

Without consulting shareholders, the board had no problem in voting another £40,000 to the Conservative Party. This decision was taken on its merits, and had nothing to do with the presence on the M&S board of Lady Young, a former Tory minister of state at the Foreign Office and vice-chair of the Conservative Party; and Lord Sieff, a much-honoured member of the Board of Treasurers of the Conservative Party.

PIRC, the pensions consultants, who sometimes have the gall to criticise big companies on behalf of their member pension funds, was a little disturbed to hear that Coopers & Lybrand were being recommended as auditors of M&S's books for another year.

This was a clear breach of the PIRC guideline that accountancy firms should not get the big prize of auditing the company's books if they get more than 25 per cent of their auditing fee from the company for other things. The obvious point is that if accountancy firms get huge sums from a company for other services, they might not feel entirely independent when they vet that company's accounts.

Coopers & Lybrand got rather more than 25 per cent. Their fee for auditing M&S was £800,000 — and they got £700,000 for "other services" from M&S. PIRC had the cheek to recommend shareholders to abstain on Coopers & Lybrand's reappointment. But the block vote did the trick as usual, and Coopers triumphed.

SANDWICH COURSE IN GUN-RUNNING

■ HM CUSTOMS, flushed with their successes in the Supergun and Matrix Churchill cases, are now investigating Jonathan Aitken's former firm BMARC and its "Project Lisi" contract to send naval guns which Michael Heseltine says "could have gone (illegally) to Iran".

Two directors of BMARC have said publicly that they knew the guns were going to Iran — John Anderson and Gerald James, the former chairman. Both have been interviewed by HM Customs. When James arrived at Customs HQ for his interview on 19 July, he was surprised to be arrested and held for the four hours of his interview. (This is apparently a habit with HM Customs, whose purpose is to avoid the possibility of their interviewee walking out bored or in a huff.)

James was surprised by the tone of the questions, which seemed to be seeking to establish that he had no idea about the destination of the guns his company was exporting. The Customs officers were triumphant when they established that James had no documents to prove the guns' illegal destination. To their obvious irritation, James continued to insist that all the directors of BMARC, including Jonathan Aitken MP, knew perfectly well that the guns were bound for Iran.

One curious matter raised by the Customs officers was the case of a suspect cheese and tomato sandwich. In early 1989, Stephan Adolphus Kock, spooky gun-toting director of BMARC, was staying at the local hostelry, the Angel and Royal at Grantham, Lincs. Arriving back late at night, Kock was kept waiting outside, and then served with a stale sandwich.

He flew at once into a tired and emotional outburst, demanding that the waiter get down on his knees to apologise, threatening at once to call his friend Charles Forte to apprise him of the impertinence of his hotel staff, and calling for the local health inspector. The manager and the waiter eventually made formal statements about the incident, but thanks to a judicious intervention by Kock's fellow BMARC director Major General Donald Isles, former director-general of weapons for the Army, the matter was closed.

Quite why HM Customs should have shown such interest in this strange incident is not yet clear.

VAT'S YOUR LOT!

■ ABOUT 100 angry creditors packed into the conference room of the Hendon Hall Hotel on 20 July to hear the latest on the receivership of the once-proud construction group VAT Watkins.

The feverish atmosphere was not helped when it was announced that Mr Victor Watkins, former head of the group, could not attend the meeting — he was away in Switzerland. None of the former Watkins directors could make it, either.

After listening to the liquidator, David Platt of Sorskys, most creditors felt that the original estimate — that they might recover 30p for every pound they were owed by Watkins — was decidedly optimistic. They were specially annoyed to hear that the proceeds of the sale of Salperton village in Gloucestershire, which is owned by Victor Watkins, will not be going to the creditors. In all the angry questioning, only one specific contract was mentioned — the £7.5 million job to refurbish the huge Post Office sorting office on London's Mount Pleasant.

Four dates kept being mentioned:

1) January 1993: "Wild" Bill Cockburn, chief executive of the Post Office, and a close friend of Victor Watkins, joined the board of VAT Watkins.

2) April 1993: VAT Watkins started work on the Post Office contract.

3) June 1993: Cockburn resigned from the board of VAT Watkins.

4) June 1994: VAT Watkins went into receivership, owing many millions of pounds to 3,000 creditors, several of whom (still unpaid) were working at Mount Pleasant.

The meeting voted unanimously to set aside £50,000 "to investigate the role of present and past directors in VAT Watkins".

Pc PROD

■ WHATEVER happens to the peace process, the Royal Ulster Constabulary is determined not to lose its grip over law and order in Northern Ireland.

The argument is that the old sectarian, Orange-biased RUC is a thing of the past. It is insisted that Catholic coppers have as much chance of promotion as Protestants.

The point was dramatically demonstrated in recently published but unnoticed figures about the first and most important of all police promotions.

In 1994, 58 constables were promoted to sergeant. Their religious background was as follows: Protestant, 54; unknown, 2; Roman Catholic, 2.

In other words, 3.4 per cent of promoted constables were Catholics. More than 40 per cent of the Northern Ireland population are Catholic.

ASBESTOS OF A BAD JOB

■ FEW hotels in London are more prestigious (or expensive) than the Grosvenor House in Park Lane.

Electrician Alex Corcoran, who was working on a refurbishment there, was surprised to find what he calls "an extremely dangerous" pile of asbestos at the bottom of a pipe in the staff staircase. He reported it at once.

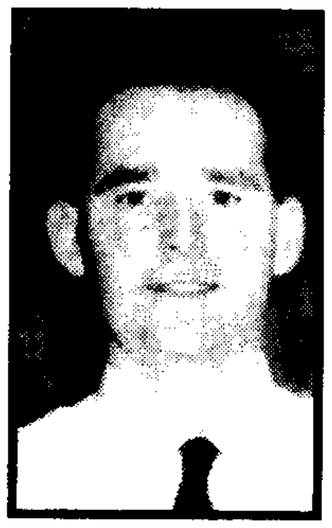
When he came to work the next morning the asbestos was still there. He complained at once to the hotel's health and safety officer, who told him the material was not asbestos, but fibreglass.

Mr Corcoran took a sample of the material, and announced that he was going to report the matter to the general manager.

An hour later, he was sacked for "causing trouble". He sent his sample for analysis. It was brown asbestos.

A Grosvenor House spokeswoman tells the *Eye* blandly that asbestos had indeed been found as a result of Mr Corcoran's report. It was "dealt with to the satisfaction of the Westminster environmental health office."

As for the sacking, Mr Corcoran was employed by sub-contractors who were "responsible for his dismissal for their own reasons".



ALEX CORCORAN

You can write to Paul Foot at 6 Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG, or leave a message for him on 0171 287 3183

In the City

THOSE, and there are many, taken in by the emotive campaign to free disgraced Barings trader Nick Leeson from the grisly fate awaiting him at the fiendish hands of Singapore's Dr Fu Man Chu would be forgiven for believing that he is a scapegoat prevented from telling the true story of how the City's oldest merchant bank collapsed while the real villains escape unpunished.

After all, that is the line peddled in tabloid and broadsheet leader columns and headlines and encouraged by Leeson's lawyer Stephen Pollard and by pictures of his tearful wife Lisa loyally keeping body and soul together by working in a teashop.

Bring Leeson back to Britain from Frankfurt for trial, Tory and Labour MPs demand of the Serious Farce Office, so we can hear the truth and ensure the punishment of those guilty men in the old boy network at Barings and the Bank of England who are really responsible.

The only problem is that the man really responsible for the downfall of Barings is Nick Leeson — but sadly there is little or no evidence of any offence in this country for which he could be successfully prosecuted. And as to Leeson telling the whole truth, that clearly would be a novel experience for him, as for almost three years he lived a lie in Singapore, skilfully hiding the fact that he was not making, but losing, millions.

The report into Barings by the Bank of England's Board of Banking Supervision leaves many questions unanswered regarding the behaviour of Barings executives in Singapore and London and the Bank's own regulators. It fails to explore the extent to which Leeson was able to escape detection because of an epidemic of wilful blindness prompted by the bonuses his phoney profits generated. Nor, not surprisingly, does it criticise the cosy regulatory regime under which the gentlemen of Barings would never be suspected of anything other than the highest standards of probity.

What the report *does* show is that Nick Loadsamoney did it. Not only that, but he planned and executed a scheme to inflate his dealing profits and his own bonus (£450,000 for last year if the balloon had not burst) almost from the word go after his arrival in Singapore in 1992. It was Leeson who created the secret account 88888 into which he slipped all the bad deals. It was Leeson who gave instructions that 88888 was to be omitted from the computer reports sent to London. It was Leeson who fled once the account was discovered.

From July 1992 until February 1995 Leeson deceived, lied and covered up dealing losses which grew from £2 million in 1992 through £21 million in 1993 to £185 million in 1994 before he and Barings were blown away by further losses of £341 million in the weeks before he did a runner.

Now it is most certainly open to debate why neither Leeson's superiors and colleagues or the auditors in Singapore failed to detect what he was doing. And it is also clear that many in London could and should have found him out, if only because of the relentless demands for money to fund his "unauthorised" activities. But it is also clear that those in London understood little of what Leeson was doing and cared even less — so long as he kept reporting profits and ensuring bonuses which for the trio at the top — Peter Baring, Andrew Tuckey and Peter Norris — were up to £1 million.

But those factors should not obscure Leeson's guilt — guilt which most clearly is legally anchored in Singapore, not London. Every act in his deception took place in Singapore. Barings in London may have been the victim, but the crime occurred thousands of miles away.

Those MPs and journalists who continue to call for the SFO to prosecute Leeson here fail to comprehend the very sound reasons why for once the SFO is not rushing towards another Blue Arrow fiasco, despite the encouragement of lawyers who could benefit greatly from the legal aid bonanza which would undoubtedly accrue to a Leeson case in Britain.

Contrary to what is suggested, the SFO has looked very closely at the case for prosecuting Leeson here. It had to, in case he arrives at Heathrow instead of Singapore. This examination failed to detect clear offences prosecutable in Britain. The offences of false accounting Leeson and his lawyers say he has committed here lack any firm jurisdictional basis and would have to rely on an assurance by Leeson to plead guilty. But no binding agreement could be entered into between the SFO and Leeson to ensure a guilty plea. Once he had what he wanted — a ticket to London — Leeson could plead not guilty to any charges, claiming that any admissions were made under duress and therefore inadmissable. The SFO would then be faced with trying to mount a prosecution for offences over which Leeson could and probably would plead that the British courts had no jurisdiction, that lying with the courts in Singapore he had skilfully evaded. Furthermore, the SFO would need to produce witnesses and documents from Singapore to make its case, but without any power to compel either in the face of a serious lack of co-operation from the Singapore authorities having cheated them of a Leeson trial.

The SFO's reluctance to enter into an unenforceable arrangement with as skilled a deceiver as Leeson is not hard to understand. Imagine the furore if the SFO mounted a prosecution from which Leeson walked!

But even if Leeson kept to his word and pleaded guilty the result would probably be — as Leeson realises — that he would face at most a three or four year sentence. That would be spent in an open prison and he would be out in under two years. Plenty of time then to enjoy the lucrative benefits from anticipated book and film deals, because his crime could most certainly pay. This comforting prospect is not offered by a longer jail sentence in Singapore.

Not that Leeson actually faces the 14 years claimed by his supporters. Lawyers in Singapore point out that cheating carries a maximum sentence of seven years and forgery two years, but that no first offender who has not personally benefitted has ever received the maximum whack, even from one of the world's more punishment-prone legal systems.

And as to the carrot of a British trial bringing out the full story, how could it if Leeson pleaded guilty? At best there would be hours of self-serving mitigation, but no witnesses and certainly no Leeson. And if he did not plead guilty he might still not testify — why should he, given the facts? Even if he did, how could he be trusted to tell the truth? His story has already changed from claiming to be able to incriminate others to saying he only has evidence of their stupidity. If Leeson has a tale to tell he will tell it in Singapore just as well, perhaps with even greater conviction.

Similarly the idea that those who allowed Leeson to break the bank are somehow getting away with it while he rots in Changi underestimates the anger generated in the City by what they did or, to be more precise, did not do. Peter Baring has lost his bank while those below him — Tuckey, Norris and Ron Baker (the head of derivatives trading) plus up to 10 other senior Barings execs — are now unemployable. They have lost jobs worth £500,000 to £1.5 million a year and are unlikely to work in the City again for the forseeable future. That is getting away with it?

But then facts are not what the Save Nick Loadsamoney campaign is all about. Leeson, like so many bent suits, could do the crime but not the time. He was only too happy to take advantage of Singapore's free market to make money but now sees its laws as unfair. The concern for his "plight", comes from those who believe that prison is for black muggers and Irish bombmakers, not City spivs, and that the law should be used not to punish the guilty but to allow them to escape.

Those who campaign to save Nick Leeson from a punishment that might deter similar Loadsamoneys would do better to push for compensation for the hundreds of elderly people who have lost savings invested for income not speculation in the £50 million Barings preference shares for whom there is no compensation and little hope. They are the real victims of Barings, not Nick Leeson.

'Slicker'

British Management Part 22.
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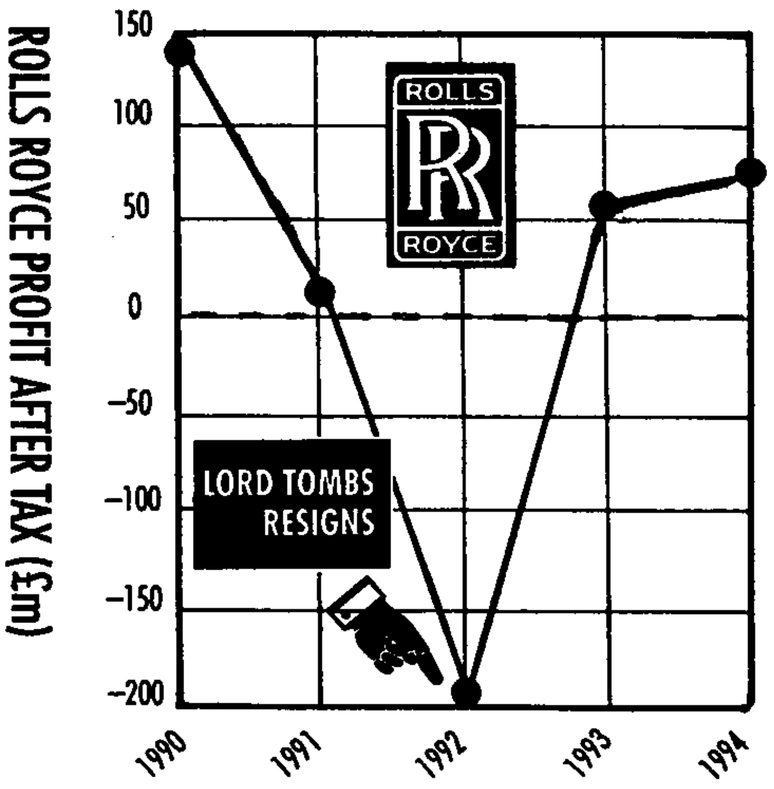

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1990	£140m	1993	£58m
1991	£19m	1994	£81m

THE DIRECTORS

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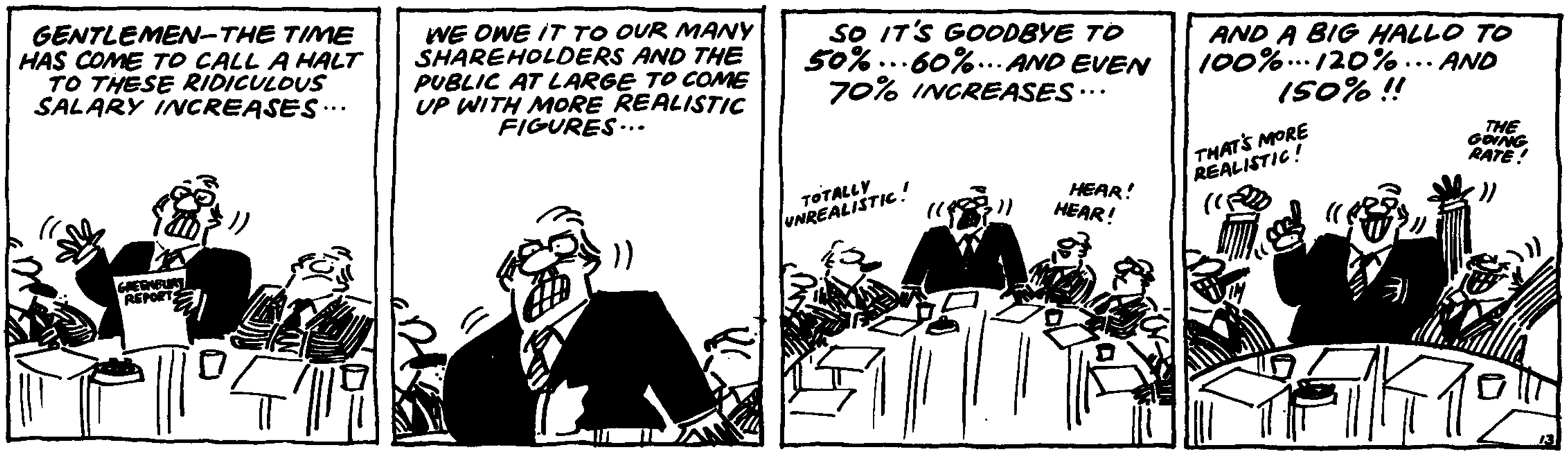
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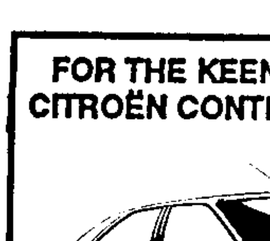

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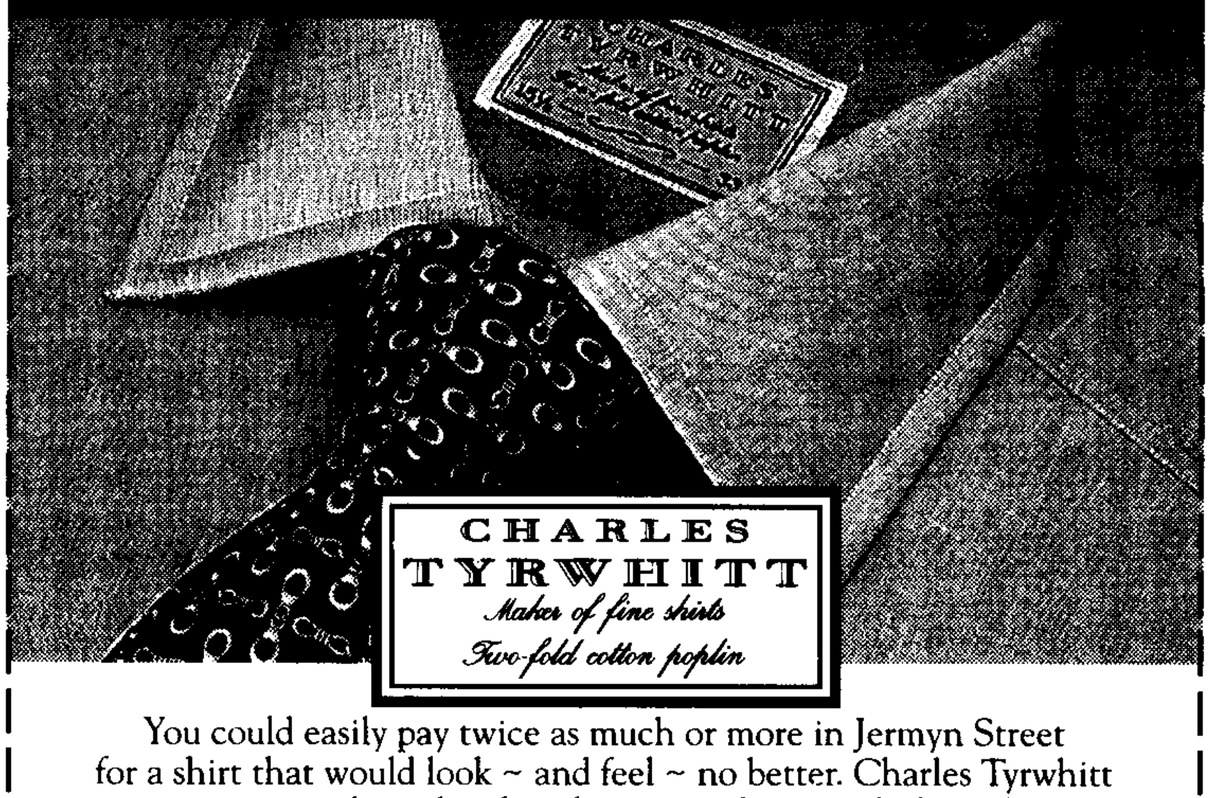

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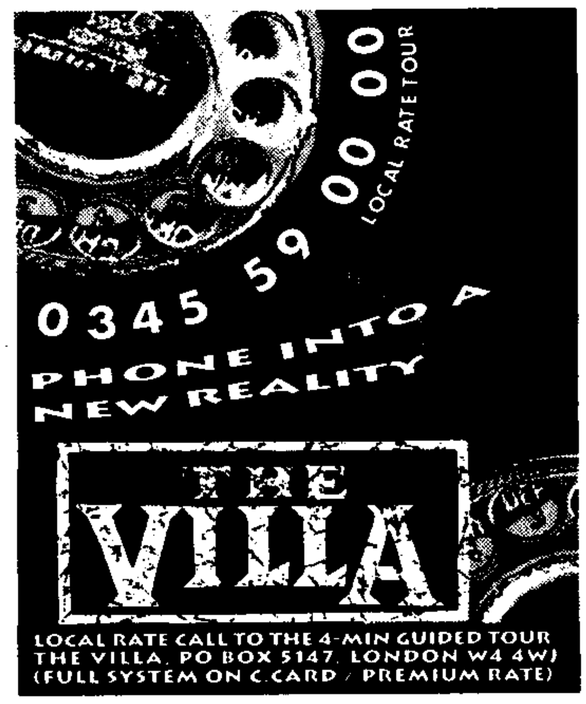
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SPEECH WRITING by Mitch Murray. See Page 30.

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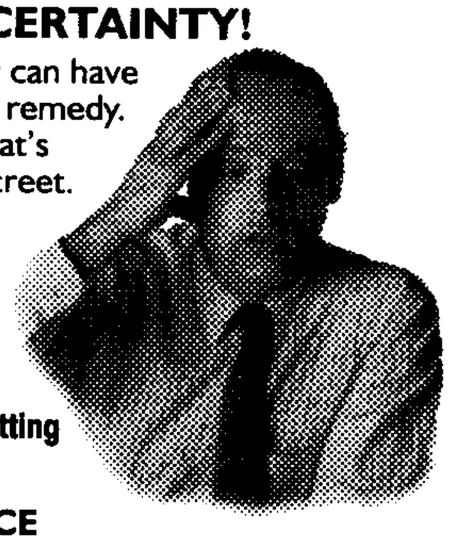

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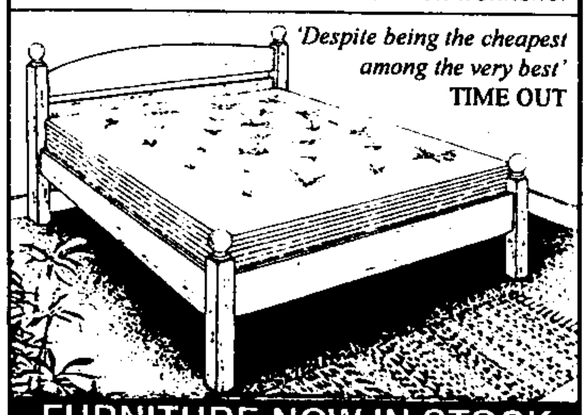

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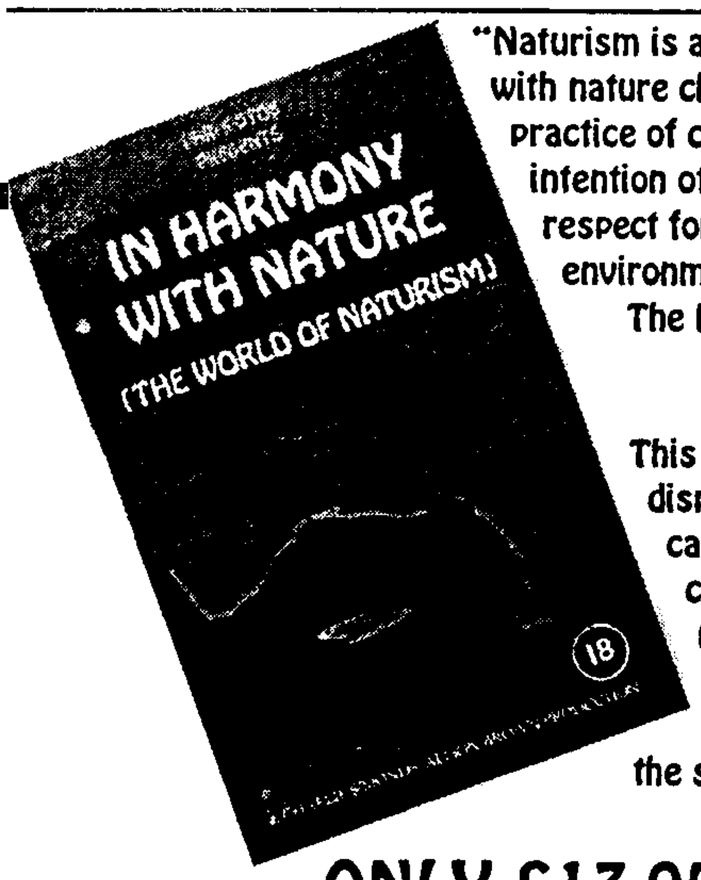

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